

The Dragon Shepherd

by Ill Lasanga

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Summary: At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking him closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

1. Setting the Trap

****How to Fight Dragons****

****Alternate Titles:**** How to Thrive, How to be a Hero, How NOT to Herd Goats, The Wild Ones, Forests of Fate, Life in Hol, I Saw Myself, Shepherd's Cutie Pie, The Dragon Shepherd, Cold Claws Warm Heart, The Best Plans.

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<p>Chapter 1: Setting the Trap

This is Hol. It's three days south of desolate, and a few degrees east of total isolation. It's located solidly in the forest of fate.

A boy was walking in the woods, carrying a pack and scanning the ground, was looking for something. He was thin and darkly tanned, with bright green eyes and black hair that stood up above his ears. He stopped to check the sky.

We're a large town, but every family knows each other well. There's a blacksmith, a mayor, several loggers, old merchants, and even a tavern for travelers who stumble out here. My mother believes it's because of the dragons that no one wants to visit.

The boy pushed his overlarge black tunic over his shoulder, adjusting the pack.

Yes, our town trains dragons. You've probably heard the stories on how our leaders made a pact with Loki for all the fire-breathers in Hel. It's not really true. They're mostly like dogs. Big, scale-y dogs that have wings and breathe fire. I know because I see them out with their owners from time to time.

Nodding, he scanned through the undergrowth, picking out a spot he would remember.

My name's Tuulikki Tanner. Please remember that I wasn't considered about it at my birth, or I would've picked a better one. My mother is a goat farmer, and my father was a small game hunter. He taught me everything he could before he died.

He set out a trap, a simple baited hook that when triggered, made a rock drop down on top of it. The black-haired boy smiled.

How to set traps, every hideaway in the forest, what each track means - everything, really, except for the things no one's ever seen.

He walked through the forest once more, and set up more traps like the first, checking over his shoulder when he could.

My father said that they were the precursors to dragons - They're said to be as big as houses, vicious, cunning, with no mercy to whoever dare tread upon their land. It was a hot topic in town if there was more than one - but no one has ever caught a so-called 'wild' dragon.

Tuulikki looked up at the sun rising into the sky. He yelped, picking out a path back to the town.

That's why I'm gonna be the first.

He tripped on a stone path in the outskirts of town.

As soon as I get a dragon of my own.

* * *

><p>Notes: And so, it begins. I think that this writing style will disappear and come back for the finale, so the rest of this fic should be standard third person point of view.

I got inspired by all of the Human!Toothless artwork on DevArt and the books, where it was a rite of passage to be able to train a dragon.

Toothless's human name is Tuulikki, which means "little wind" in Finnish, derived from _tuuli_ "wind". This was the name of a Finnish forest goddess, the daughter of Tapio. He doesn't like to use it, for

obvious reasons. His mother calls him 'Tulle' which is pronounced like 'tool' but refers to the fabric that is used in tutus and bridal veils.

Tanner is his family name, because one of his grandfathers had a very good tanning business. Tanning is the process of skinning an animal and drying out the skin and fur for later use.

Please tell me what you liked and what you didn't like about this, so I can make the rest of the story even better. Review please!

****Ill****

2. You Can't, Well, Maybe You Can

****Summary: ****In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

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><p>Chapter 2: You Can't, Well, Maybe You Can

Tuulikki ran through the town, hearing the hustle and bustle of the early risers. He nearly tripped again, on his clothes no less, but he saved himself and ran because today, of all days, was special.

Today he would finally show people that he was more than a goat herder, that he could tame monsters. He knocked on the door of Magnus's house, a man who's family had raised hatchling dragons for generations.

"Is it that day already?" a grumbling voice followed dragging feet. It took visits twice a day for three months before Magnus got fed up with Tuulikki and told him when he could take a dragon of his own.

The older man opened the door, blithely accustomed to Tuulikki speeding through. Magnus was a thin and cantankerous old man, life having sucked out any patience and joy it held for him long ago. He was clothed in rough leather and thin fireproof armor, enough to stop any stop any overexcited dragon from tearing into him. Any hair he had left was on his head was a dusty red color shorn close to the skull. Magnus grumbled some more, rubbing his forehead to ease his splitting headache, leaning his staff against the doorframe, where it's dangling teeth clinked against each other.

Gobber yapped at Tuulikki's heels, the old dragon having missed the boy. He was chubby, half-blind and battle-scarred, with scales the color of old gold that flaked off when he got too excited. Tuulikki lightly scratched its head, trying to keep Gobber from tackling him.

"Aye, shut yer gob, Gobber!" the keeper yelled over the whining. He

slammed his staff against the ground for effect. Gobber looked startled, but quickly moved away from Tuulikki, curling up near the hearth.

The graying merchant looked Tuulikki up and down, "So, yer here up and early." The black-haired boy nodded, mind already racing. What kinds of dragons did Magnus have, anyway? He hoped that there was one that was fierce, fearless, and as sharp as a spike; he wouldn't settle for less than amazing.

"Well, c'mon back." Magnus hooked his staff on the trapdoor to underneath his shop, revealing a small set of stairs leading down. Beneath the store was a small room carved from the earth, where the dragons were kept. Magnus carried a torch in, setting it in the wall. It was covered in old scorch marks, reminding Tuulikki of where he was. He contained his squeal of excitement, as that would be less than manly.

Tuulikki was looking at the dragons in delight, eyes anxiously moving from one to the other, wondering which one he would get. The lizards were curled up in sleep, rolled up like little presents waiting to be opened.

"Well?" Magnus growled, "Get going, they're not going to sleep forever, and they're right terrors when they're awake."

The tan boy picked his way through them, finding a thick-skinned one the color of burnt toast with drool coming out of its snout. He looked scary enough. "Okay, how 'bout him?"

"Can't. He's been reserved."

At this, Tuulikki turned around stared at Magnus, "What?" he said, not believing it. "You said that if I got here early I would have my pick of the litter!"

With all the grace of the Vikings he was descended from, Magnus bluntly pushed forward, "Yeah, except for that one, he's reserved."

"Okay!" Tuulikki started looking around, "That one." He pointed to a reddish brown one with jagged horns.

"The Reily family wants that one." Tuulikki growled a little, pointing at a shifting mass of yellow and blue spikes. "Reserved."

a lean yellow-gold one; "Reserved."

another thick black one curled up with a rock; "Taken."

a silver one stretching its wings; "That one's got some debt to work off."

Tuulikki asked aloud, "So, when you say you're giving me a choice, it means I have none at all?" Magnus just stared grumpily at him before the black-haired boy pointed to another dragon. Behind them, unnoticed, the lizards were perking up. For those who don't know, cold-blooded creatures tend to slow down in cool environments. In fact, when Tuulikki and Magnus came down, it was freezing enough that most dragons were too tired to move. Now that they had brought a

torch in, the little buggers were starting to wake.

Tuulikki pointed to the last dragon in the room, a mud brown one with large, blunt spikes on its body. "Ya can't have that one, he's for-" Magnus was interrupted by the 'fwoosh' of a fireball being thrown. Soon the underground room was filled with dragons clambering to Magnus for their breakfast.

"Oh boy." the older man quickly started away from his dragons, motioning for Tuulikki to come with him. Tired and very angry, the boy dodged to the side of a fire blast, grabbing something before coming back up the stairs.

Safely out of the inferno, Magnus closed the trapdoor. "Aye, sorry about not having any dragons for ya."

Tuulikki took a quick look at the bundle in his arms, and shook his head. "I think I'll be alright." the tan boy said as he dashed out of the house. Or, he tried to.

Tuulikki told himself that it wasn't his fault that Siegfried and his cronies were in the doorway, preventing him from leaving and making him turn at the worst possible second and crash into the wall.

Yep. Not his fault at all. He waited a second for the ceiling to stop moving while clutching his arms to his chest. Now if he could just get moving before Magnus noticedâ€¦

"How's the ground, Toe Licker?"

Tuulikki groaned.

Siegfried looked down on him, surrounded by other faces he knew and disliked. They were 'friends', if friendship meant knowing their first name and blaming them for anything and everything that went wrong in life. In fact, if it took that little, then he was friends with everyone of his age group.

Siegfried was the ringleader, a beefy flame-haired son of a blacksmith. When he got angry, his whole face turned a beet red and he had a tendency to destroy anything not nailed down and on fire. As a result, Tuulikki didn't like him that well, and he frowned as he saw two identical sneers.

Bartek and Berta backed up Siegfried in everything he did. They were cousins, inseparable despite growing in different households. Some people even confused the two for siblings. Bartek, ever the genius, noticed the squirming pile in Tuulikki's shirt. The dark-skinned boy grabbed at his cousin's tunic, but was ignored.

Cordi squeaked out, "Is that a-" before getting shushed by Siegfried's loud laughter. She was a dragon-lover, par for the course when your uncle was Magnus, and was smarter than Tuulikki; the round girl knew when to shut up around others, and that was half the battle in teenage politics.

And finally, Storm. Tuulikki's vision stopped flickering as soon as he saw her. Her pale hair always shone, blue dresses were clean and Tuulikki never knew if a speck of dust ever called her home. She was a dream, meant for someone who could actually keep her. It was well

known that she never lifted anything heavier than her dresses and was quite fearless.

He stared until a dragon burst out of his chest and latched onto her.

Err, the dragon that he was attempting to steal from Magnus, not a metaphorical one made out of his feelings. That would be stupid and totally ridiculous.

The whole group of teenagers jumped back except for Storm, who only looked pleasantly surprised. "Oh!" she cradled the blue and yellow spiked mass uneasily. "Did you get this one for me?"

The black-haired boy raised himself off the ground. He was about to say, "No, gimme back my dragon!" but a pompous voice broke in.

"Oh Freya, you gotta be kidding me! Not even the dragon he chose likes him!" The other kids broke out in laughter.

"Hey!" Magnus broke in, "What are you trying to do by stealing that dragon? Go back home to yer mum, ya troublemaker!"

Tuulikki bolted through the door, not looking back.

* * *

><p>Notes: The dragons are basically smaller versions of the common breeds shown in the movie, with varied color schemes. The dragons are all shorter than 4 feet. All domesticated dragons are either solid in color or have two colors and one 'fades' into the other at certain points. They eat small game (rabbits, mice, etcâ€|) and certain plants, considering there are no lakes or oceans around to fish from.

Yes, the cast has POC. I didn't want to go all the way, because that would mean when you put them against their owners, it'd be like slavery all over again. Sooooâ€|only a few are dark-skinned.

Also, for future reference, Tuulikki's skin tone is between Will Smith's and Aldis Hodge's. Look them up if you don't know about them.

Here's the names for the other kids:

(Hookfang) Siegfried- means 'peace' and 'victory'. Chosen because I needed something in two parts. Also, 'fried'. Is ginger, because the 'fiery redhead' jokes never get old.

(Barf) Bartek- the Polish version of Bartholomew. He is also not white, I just haven't figured out a shade.

(Belch) Berta- Polish version of Bertha. She has the same color of skin as her cousin.

(Meatlug) Cordi- Short for Cordelia, the name of a princess who was loyal to her father. Remember what Fishlegs said about Gronkles? _'What you're looking for is loyalty.'_

(Stormfly) Storm- just because I want her to be the only one out like

Astrid was.

Kudos if you thought getting Hiccup was going to be like it was in the books. Please review!

****Ill****

3. The Lost and the Found

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AU.

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><p>Chapter 3: The Lost and the Found

The world was green and bright in the forest. The early morning coolness had dissipated, leaving the bugs to buzz comfortingly in the warm air. Sitting down, legs crossed, Tuulikki bent into himself, unable to lift his head from his thoughts.

"I know today was supposed to be different. I just know it." Tuulikki whispered, gazing at the forest floor. A small cross was driven into the ground before the tan boy, but he wasn't seeing it. All he could see was the mocking faces of his peers. He tried to focus on Storm, the one too shocked to say anything, but his memories gave her a twisted smile and a piercing laugh. It was true, he was a coward, he was such a clumsy kid he ran away instead of standing up for himself. His feet picked the path, and now he was at the end of it.

It was inevitable that he came here, to his father's grave.

It was at the farthest edge of town, halfway home if you knew the way. "All of it's so unfair. I keep trying, but no one will give me a chance. I'm just the clumsy goat boy in his grandfather's clothes." He voice broke a little at the end. The emotions broiled in his gut, anger attacking his loneliness who was trying hard not to bump into grief, lest he start crying again. Tuulikki plucked some grass blades from the ground, shredding them carefully. The sun was getting to his eyes, making them blurry, he decided. It was time to leave.

Tuulikki picked his way across the forest, heading for his traps. Maybe skinning a dead rabbit would make him feel better. As he walked, the familiar path of the forest comforted him. He moved as if he was a graceful shadow, swift and silent. Village be damned, he wasn't an idiot that couldn't walk if his life depended on it! He was a hunter who didn't believe in stupid fairy tales like wild dragons.

At least, that's what he told himself until he saw the trap. He gasped and approached it carefully. Underneath the rock was mass of something. There seemed to be a thick branch that was wedged in there. Tuulikki pried it loose, revealing something brown, green, and scaled.

"Scales" the idea connected in Tuulikki's mind. Scales means that a dragon was here; a dragon meant chance to prove himself. His thoughts were catching like fire.

He doesn't need a dragon, he doesn't need anyone. Stupid thing even caught its "scale, tooth, horn? What is that?" in a trap. There was a small trail of blood leading away, which means it could be tracked. Tuulikki centered himself - he could do this. It would fix everything.

He followed the tracks, mind racing. It wouldn't matter that he was a poor farmer, he would go down as legend in the minds of the town if he brought back proof. He securely gripped his knife, wondering what part to take. The heart would be obvious, but that would probably cost him all day to try and carve it out. Maybe the wing "yeah, that could work. It would be light and easy to carry, and big enough so that no one would mistake it coming from their own dragon. He grinned, almost missing the soft skittering right in front of him.

Fresh blood dotted the ground at his feet, so he knelt down for a better look. He looked to where it ended "and there the dragon was.

'That can't be it.' he thought. The dragon in front of him was barely bigger than a lamb. But the blood trail ended here, so either that was his quarry or it was following the blood like he was. It had only two large grey horns on its head with smaller ones outlining its jaw, making it look defenseless compared to the other dragons he'd seen that day. The creature was an apple green, with minor freckles of darker green on its body and definitely around the mouth. It wasn't a dragon he'd ever seen before.

Tuulikki started talking, either out of shock or nerves, "A wild dragon." he whispered, shaken. His sense came back, and with that, his snark. Weren't they supposed to be bigger?

The more he thought about it, the more he realized: That little thing couldn't hurt him if it tried! Here he was, stalking it like it was actually menacing. "Dear Odin, I am stupid." Tuulikki thought to himself, "What was I going to do if I found an actual dragon, yell at it?" he frowned, frustrated.

"Well, here it is, the bane of my village's existence!" he shouted, waving his arms, "Time to become a hero and stop its reign of terror once and for all!" He stomped around, gesturing at the air with his knife. He took a second look, curiosity growing.

It was curled up against a tree for support, its whole body shaking. The dragon tried to pull itself closer to the tree, then froze in fear as it saw the boy.

Tuulikki came closer, not sure if it could shoot fire at him. The green dragon had curled its tail under itself before - now it stuck straight out. Now it started shaking again, its oversized wings fluttering every so often like it was breathing funny. The boy was close enough to touch the creature, and he knelt down, getting a good look. He hadn't seen that color on any of the other breeds, nor could recall any book telling him about dragons having freckles. Its wingspan was also bigger than the norm - maybe because it hadn't

grown into it's size yet? He was also checking for a collar, maybe a brand or other signs of ownership. It would do no good, Tuulikki reasoned, if he hurt someone else's dragon.

The wild beast shrank back, fear evident in it's bright green eyes. It let out a final hiccup, than closed it's eyes and lay still, waiting.

Tuulikki stopped, puzzled. Why wouldn't it do anything? Surely it had to have more bite? This was supposed to be a demon, a monster that ruled the forest. But, right now it was a tiny, hiccupping terror that didn't even try to fight back. Baffled, he laughed, a rough sound forced out of his throat. The noise startled the dragon, making it hiccup again in shock. The black-haired boy smiled at the creature, leaning back to enjoy the sheer ridiculousness of the situation. And to think he was going to kill the poor thing! He let out another bark of laughter.

The dragon must have been startled again, because it's wing peeled back, showing what it had tried to keep covered; A mere stump of a leg, bleeding out into the ground.

The world stopped for the second time in as many minutes. His eyes were drawn to it, intrigued and confused.

"I did this." he realized, not certain he said it aloud.

Tuulikki saw sudden visions of what must have happened. The dragon was hunting in the forest. It must have come upon his trap and gotten stuck - so horribly stuck that it had gotten desperate enough to chew it's own leg off for survival. The thought made Tuulikki sick to his stomach. He stood, at once, to leave. He wanted to be so far away. He cast his eyes back down to the dragon, who was starting to move again. It's wings flared, making Tuulikki step back, surprised. It took a few uncertain and unsteady steps before it fainted on the ground.

He stared at the fallen creature, stunned. Tuulikki turned away, looking straight ahead into the forest, now menacing in the late morning sun. He grabbed at his shirt, rubbing the soft fabric between his fingers.

He turned back to the wild dragon, kneeling down. He placed his hands underneath his shirt and picked the dragon up, careful not to touch it. The dragon fit neatly in his arms; it's sliver horned-head tucked in Tuulikki's elbow while it's tail was wrapped around itself.

He headed home.

* * *

><p>Notes: What, you thought Hiccup would be bigger? Faster? More Night Fury like? Nah, his strength doesn't lie in intimidation, he's resourceful!

Hiccup is based off a picture on Dev(iant)Art. Just search 'hiccup dragon human' and it should be the first on the list. Please favorite it! Seriously, it's good art.

For those of you who don't trust Dev(iant)Art, Hiccup is supposed to

be based on a Terrible Terror. He looks toothless, but has small, serrated teeth right next to his lips. He has little to no spikes or fins. His wings are bigger than a Terror's - they reach about a foot in each direction and can be used for gliding and short flights. He is light and can be placed on the head without difficulty. His eyes are the same color as his human self's, with whites and a round iris and pupil. His diet consists of small game and some plants, like the other dragons.

Tuulikki's father's name is Drummond, which means "ridge" in Gaelic. In combination with his mother's name, it's also a reference to Stoic's Thunderdrum, Thornado.

How do you think I'm doing? Please, send me a review!

****Ill****

4. Patching Up

****Review Replies!:****

Final Syai Lunar Generation: Thank you so much for your enthusiastic reviews! I wanted him to be really close to his human self, so yeah, no leg. More info about it will appear in this chapter.

Realization: It would be very hard to get dry ice in this setting, though. I have read that far in Inheritance Cycle, but it's not a reference. Hiccup is missing his left leg, the same one as his human self lost at the end of HTTYD. Unfortunately, I have problem with left and right, so it's not really mentioned so that I don't confuse myself. Anyway, thank you!

Saphirabrightscale: Glad to know I'm cool! Thank you for responding!

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><p>Chapter 4: Patching Up

It was a little past lunchtime when Tuulikki came home, dragon in tow. His family had a moderate bit of land right next to the forest where they raised goats and farmed for themselves. Their house was fairly spacious - a bedroom each for Tondra and Tuulikki, a main room where they ate and worked, and an underground cellar. A barn where the goats lived was nearby. His father had helped them by hunting and selling his catch, but since he died, nothing's been the same. It was hard work for a few years, but Tondra was a brilliant mother who learned how to tend to the earth quickly.

The dark-haired boy came into the house quietly, trying not to be seen. He grabbed a pail of water and an old shirt, heading to his room so he could work on his 'patient'. Tuulikki's room was dark,

with a floor of beaten earth. He had been basically raised in it, knowing each inch like it was his own mind. There was a simple straw bed and folded woolen blankets, undisturbed until winter. In the corner there was a pillow and two bowls, untouched. There was a window, which only showed a grassy field and the edge of the forest.

Tuulikki ignored the view and used the sunlight to find a large plank of wood and block the doorway. It was one of the agreements that he made with his parents, since no one in the house knew how to install a proper door with hinges, that they would just place a door-sized bit of wood in the way for privacy.

He needed a lot of privacy now.

Tuulikki stared at the dragon in his arms, feeling slightly foolish. It was curled up, vivid green against the black cloth of his shirt. It had stayed still on the trip, not even whimpering once. Tuulikki quickly placed him on a waiting pillow which was far too big for it's size. He easily filled the bowl next to it with water, unsure of what to try next. The bloodied leg was staring at him, filling him with dread and guilt.

"Dragons are basically goats, right?" he laughed faintly at his own joke. He tore himself a rag, wet it, and started cleaning out the wound, picking out debris as carefully as he could. A red welt was behind the dried blood, covering what was sure to be it's leg muscles. The insides were cut nearly clean through, with little spikes of dried flesh sticking out. The scales were slowly growing over the edges, making them ragged. Tuulikki was quite happy that the dragon wasn't bigger, or else it might have bled out and died.

It struck him quite suddenly that he had no idea if any poultices would work for healing dragons. He looked over to it's face, unsureâ€|only to find it staring back at him. The green dragon cocked it's head, as if trying to understand what Tuulikki was doing to it. The boy was similarly confused, absolutely sure that the dragon had still been unconscious.

He was struck by the beast's eyesâ€|they were unreal. It was as if someone tried to combine all the colors of the forest into a single shade of green. The longer he stared, the more entranced he became. He was sure that he would've been there for a while longer if the dragon hadn't broken eye contact. The dragon moved its head closer to the leg. A pink tongue steadily licked the amputation until saliva coated the raw wound. The head pulled back, the forest eyes stared at him for another long second, and the dragon laid its head down away from Tuulikki, ignoring him.

Breathless, Tuulikki wrapped up it's leg. He couldn't believe it. Even the sweetest of his mother's goats became irritable when you tried to heal them. Tuulikki had prepared himself for bites and burns, growling if he was lucky, but this?

This was not what he was prepared for. The boy began milling around the room, searching for his stash of jerky. The dragon was scarily still, it's chest barely moving up and down. It's head was still staying away from him, ignoring the heavy footfalls as Tuulikki searched.

"Ah ha!" the lean boy grasped onto the dried meat that was sandwiched between his night clothes and pulled. He placed it next to the dragon, satisfied. He looked around, checking to see his room wasn't too messy, and his eyes were drawn again to the resting dragon.

There was a dragon in his room. There was a dragon in his room. Tuulikki started pacing, suddenly frightened. A dragon, that by any and all accounts shouldn't be there. What was he doing? He had a plan yesterday, what was it?

1. Get a dragon.
2. Train the dragon to be his hunting partner.
3. Kill a wild dragon with it's help.
4. Get proof of him killing a wild dragon
5. Finally become respected.

Getting a 'trainable' dragon was out. Tuulikki sighed, he knew that Magnus was most likely yelling to anyone who'd listen about 'that thieving goat boy'. There goes his chance for another year. The Plan, at least, would be delayed for a while.

Tondra can't know about the wild dragon, was the next thing he decided. He was pretty sure that she was against him getting a regular dragon anyway, and probably heard about what he did at Mangus's. He's never been particularly lucky, as his mother thrives on gossip.

That just leaves the dragon. The green reptile was resting, and Tuulikki thought he heard it snore. It's wings flapped, and again there was a small hiccup in it's breathing. The guilt tugged on his heart, making him feel heavy. Tuulikki moved to his bed, cradling his head in his hands. He couldn't just turn him out, not when he was hurt.

Then there was a knock at the door. "Tulle?"

He jumped from off the bed, as if he'd been burned. "Mom!" The boy immediately moved to the door, propping it open and sticking his head through. He bared his teeth in what he hoped was a 'I'm pleasantly surprised and not at all hiding something' smile, banishing any thought of the dragon behind him.

Tondra's hands were clasped, tan fingers intertwined before they were ripped apart in surprise. She reflexively smoothed down her blue-grey apron against her dark dress, making her seem anxious. Her brown eyes, however, were sharp and determined. "I talked to Magnus this morning."

Tuulikki grimaced, uneasiness flitting over his face like lamplight. His mother grew sterner, "You can't just go around stealing other people's dragons! What if someone tried to take Hammond, did you ever think about that?"

A flare of anger leaped up Tuulikki's throat, an argument on the tip of his tongue. "I only tried to take one because the stupid 'Dragon

Master' wouldn't let me!" He moved out from his room.

"No matter." Tondra shut him down with a flick of her hand, "You get your wish. He's agreed to forgive you, if, you help him train the dragons." From the tone of her voice, it was not his decision.

Tuulikki, meanwhile, didn't believe what he'd heard. Training dragons? Under Magnus? That would drive him mad, listening to the old man and having to obey him. Then, he remembered that his 'friends' would be taking the lessons as well. He would be watching them show off their dragons, something that he can't have for another year. "What?"

"Magnus is going to take you on as his apprentice. He's expecting you to be there early tomorrow." his mother replied, still stern.

"But-"

"Think of it this way. You get training to handle dragons and maybe you can get on Magnus's good side. Next year you can definitely get a dragon of your own."

"How did you get him to agree to that?"

"I've got my ways. Now, since I don't see the dragon you were supposed to be training the whole day, I guess it's time for your chores."

Tuulikki frowns and stalks away, grumbling about how he didn't get lunch and that life was so unfair. His mother just watches him walk away, sadness creeping into her face at the corners.

He returns to his room after sundown, tired to his bones. The boy hovers over his patient for a half-second, seeing it shiver in the cooling air. A spare woolen blanket is pulled up to the dragon's chin, and Tuulikki collapses in his own bed shortly after. He is asleep in minutes.

The dragon, still awake, looks over to the sleeping boy. If one could see him in the dark, you could mistake it for smiling. He burrowed into the warm covers, safe for the night.

* * *

><p>Notes:

Tondra means 'like thunder' in Esperanto. I don't know if it's going to be shown, but she has a crazy amount of swears for when she gets mad. She's supposed to be a Skrill, but I really just needed a foil for Stoic.

Okay, so please skip this bit if you don't want to hear about Hiccup's wound.

I wanted this fic to have a bit of realism with it's injuries. What I didn't want was Hiccup to have his leg sticking out like an intrusion. My first idea lead to impromptu third-world style surgery, with bonus squirming Hiccup. That didn't really fit with the tone of

the story. I doubt Hiccup would like a prosthetic attached to a healing wound, as that would hurt, and as an animal, he'd just want it off, not understanding that it was there to help him move around.

So, with that in mind, I just cut off even more of Hiccup's leg! Instead of having it chopped off right above the knee like human Hiccup, most of dragon Hiccup's upper leg is gone. I've seen dogs who've adapted to having three legs like that and walking around fine.

Here's the semi-believable version of how it happened: Hiccup's upper leg bone was dislocated from his hip bone/pelvis by the trap. He accidentally pulled the leg bone farther apart from his hip when he tried to get away. When he chewed off his own leg to get free, Hiccup was lucky enough to bite through the parts where there was no bone, and as a result, got a clean amputation.

Please tell me if that made any sense in your reviews!

****Ill****

5. The First Day

****Summary: ****In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup
AU.

****Disclaimer: ****I do not own the characters depicted in this story

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><p>Chapter 5: The First Day

The waking sun glared at Tuulikki's back, watching as he hurried his way to Magnus's house. He held his food up high as he ran, past experience noting that bread and jerky did not taste good with dirt in them. The boy was sure he cut a strange figure; Back straight like it'd been tied to a board, legs jutting out in an uneven rhythm, green eyes worriedly scanning over the ground, and his arms in the air, oversized sleeves flying behind them. He didn't meet anyone on his way. Tuulikki thought that was great, considering his luck. Now if only no one would show up for trainingâ€|

He rounded the corner, jogging steadily as Magnus's house came in sight. A figure was beside the door, with a bundle of wooden stakes. Tuulikki quickly slowed down his approach, glaring at him with all the strength he could. Magnus frowned, wrinkles deepening.

"Glad ta know ya listen to yer mother." He shoved the stakes into Tuulikki's arms, then bent to pick up a crate. "Follow me."

They wound their way past Magnus's house, into the woods. The trees closed in on them, green branches covering the early morning sky. The dragon master started talking, weaving a steady path through the forest. "You'll do what I say you'll do. When I say 'jump', you say 'How high?'. I'm not gonna tolerate laziness, thick-headedness, or arguments. One wrong look and I'm gonna sic Gobber on ya. I'm only

taking you in outta the goodness of my heart, got it?"

Tuulikki, who up until now was concentrating on a failure-free apprenticeship, tried to open his mouth, but was overwhelmed by the clatter of sticks from his now dirt-streaked hands. He muttered as he picked himself up from the forest floor, gathering the stakes up in his arms.

"I suppose that's all you have to say for yourself." Magnus, unimpressed, waited until his apprentice was ready.

They reached cleared out section of the forest, around fifty feet from where they stood to the edge of the other side. A path cut from the trees to, what Tuulikki guessed, was the village. This place was a rough patch of dirt and undergrowth, with a circle of stone, like an oversized well, in one corner and a half-circle of stakes in the other. The trees seemed to stand, guarding this place. A haphazard shed was built on the far side of where they were. Gobber was waiting for them, napping on a pile of firewood.

"Ya see that?" Magnus gestures to the half-finished circle. "Finish it. That's where we're going to be training."

"Why don't we just use that?" Tuulikki pointed to the stone circle.

"That - is the Kill Ring."

"â€|Oh."

Tuulikki stilled, recognizing the place from the tales in his mind. This was the Arena, a place where the yearly Tournaments were held. Travelers came from far off lands to watch as skilled dragons fought for their masters. His mother had made him promise never to sneak off to watch; Tuulikki had been told that when he was old enough, his father would take him. That was a long time ago. He quieted, focusing on digging holes for the stakes. Magnus, after having checked on the shed, hovered over him for a second.

"Ya know, ya don't have t' be scared." Tuulikki jumped up at the sound of his crackling voice. The old man was just there, standing beside him. He wasn't intruding on his space, but it unnerved the boy. Maybe he'll leave him alone if he just gave him an answer.

"'M'not scared." That came out a little angrier than it should've been.

Magnus just shrugged, "Alright then. I got something for ya." He tossed the boy a coil of rope. "Wrap that around tha bottom. I don't want any dragons getting out."

"Won't this catch fire?"

The elder laughed. "Ya think I'm stupid? It's been treated to be fireproof." He whistled to Gobber, who picked his golden head up. "Go ahead. Fire!"

Tuulikki dropped the rope as soon as the fireball hit. Soon it stopped crackling, and dimmed. He swore he saw a smile on Gobber's

face before it laid down again. Tuulikki gingerly picked up the rope, surprised to find it cool to the touch. He wrapped the fence as he was told, and then tried his hardest to disappear.

The other students were filing in, chatting and carrying in their fire-breathing bundles of joy. They gathered around the makeshift arena, eager to show off their newly-acquired pets. Tuulikki was on the doorstep of the shed, unnoticed, but able to see what was happening.

Bartek and Berta had a dragon each, ropelike with thin crowns of horns. The cousins had tied leashes to keep them from wandering off. The golden dragons twined and twirled around their master's legs idly. "That's Tuffnut!" Berta pointed at the one closest to her ankle. For a second she looked confused and pointed to the other, "Wait, maybe that's Tuffnut."

Her cousin disagreed, "No, that's Ruffnut!" the tan boy tried to grab one of the dragons. His feet were tangled up in the leashes; Bartek had nothing to do but fall down, dragging his cousin with him. "See?" he held up the squirming dragon's left leg. "Tuff's got a birthmark."

"Ohhâ€¦"

Siegfried, unimpressed, took his creature out from under his arm.

Tuulikki glowered. It was the thick-skinned one from yesterday. It was curled up around Siegfried's arm, viciously smirking, horns dangerously poised on it's head. "This is Snotlout." The brown dragon raised it's head at it's name. The other kids gathered around, awed.

Cordi, holding onto her own lump of brown, felt it was time to share. "Well, this is Fishlegs!" and she shoved her dragon over to Siegfried's, nose to nose.

Snotlout and Fishlegs stared at each other.

The teens stared at them.

Magnus, now ready, stood in front of them. "Welcome to Dragon Training!" he said, voice booming.

Nobody noticed.

Magnus pounded his staff to the ground, sending the teeth on it clattering and the dragons squirming in their owner's arms. "You lot!" He smiled at the panicking teens, catching their attention. "I'm trying to make ya learn something here! Pay attention!" he whistled, calling to his personal firepit. "Make no mistake, dragons are wild, nasty creatures that won't hesitate to bite yer arm off."

Gobber stalked his way over to the group, making menacing growls and snarling at the other students. The golden dragon wormed his way around Magnus's legs. The old man knelt down and scratched one side of his neck, and the dragon responded with a growl of affection.

"But, with a little discipline and a _lot _of food, they're as loyal as a south-bound bird." He nodded, sage-like in his ways of dragon ownership.

The other teens, amazed, also nodded.

"Now, put yer dragons into the Ring so that we can get started."

"What's he doing here?" Tuulikki apparently wasn't trying hard enough not to be noticed. There was an outcry of teenage voices. Siegfried pulled Snotlout closer to him, "Oh, no, you're NOT getting my dragon, no way!" The cousins mimicked him, shielding their dragons from the almost thief. Almost unconsciously, they gathered around him in a circle. Tuulikki felt the air grow thicker as the other teens stared.

"Now, hold on! He's _my_ apprentice." Magnus's cracked voice ran over the clamor. "He's not getting a dragon unless I say so!"

"Gee, thanks." he dryly responded.

"Now, back to the lesson!" He turned his back on the scowling teenager, giving the others the right to do the same. "Alright, alright, put yer dragons in the circle, they're not gonna run away. I need your hands fer this." They grumbled, but complied, gathering around the circle. Magnus stood at the head, looking oddly proud and grouchy, like a father eating a beautiful wedding cake that his son made.

"What's the first thing you need when trying to train a dragon?"

"Some meat!" Siegfried puffed his chest out in pride.

"No."

He instantly deflated.

Cordi spoke up, "Uhh, a plan?"

"Not what I was thinking."

"Some gloves!" To everyone's surprise, Storm explained herself. "I mean, you wouldn't want to get bitten or scratched or poisoned, right?"

"Ya got it, lass!" He whistled to Tuulikki and waved him over. "Grab me that crate! Storm's right. If you've got a rabid dragon on your hands, it's best to have protection. Otherwise, it'll just go after the meat and ignore you." He passed out the gloves. "These are just until you're sure they won't bite you."

"How long will that take?"

"A few years."

Magnus paced. "Now, I think you've found this out already, but just in caseâ€¦" He reached down into the fence and plucked Storm's dragon

out.

"Astrid!" Storm shouted. She was bright blue, with sharp eyes and even sharper spikes circling her head and tail. Her wings fluttered and bashed against Magnus's chest. The old man snorted, reaching under her chin and scratched. She melted instantly, purring.

"Each dragon as a soft spot where they like to be scratched more than anything. This is useful for lots of reasons. It distracts 'em and calms 'm down. Today I want you to learn what your dragon likes." He handed Astrid off to Storm. The group dispersed and Tuulikki had nothing more to do that morning but watch from a distance as his peers tried hard not to get bitten.

Soon, the sun was at it's highest point in the sky. Magnus sent them all off, leaving the black-haired boy to clean up the mess. Then he set off, tired and hungry, for home.

With a few ideas to try.

* * *

><p>Author's notes:

For those wondering about their loyalty issues: The old quote: "Your dog never obeyed you, he only sometimes agreed with you." comes to mind. Disloyal dragons was also part of the HTTYD books. Hiccup was a hero not only because he was levelheaded and smart, but because he had the loyalty of his dragon, the Toothless Daydream named Toothless.

Also, this is the point where I don't have anything typed up for the next chapter. Expect delays, I am sorry.

Ill

6. I've Got You

Summary: In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

Disclaimer: I do not own the characters depicted in this story

Notes: For best results, listen to 'Forbidden Friendship' from the HTTYD soundtrack.

* * *

><p>Chapter 6: I've Got You

It was after dinner, after chores and a million other things that prevented Tuulikki thinking about just what had taken residence in his room. Now that he had a moment, anxiety flooded his senses, reminding him why he had set out those traps in the forest. It wasn't to hurt them, but protect him.

He had grabbed his father's gloves. They were big on him, and he had to clench his fist to keep them from slipping off. His fingers didn't fit all the way through, so the tips were flattened, like claws.

The freckled dragon picked it's head up, carefully studying him with too-green eyes.

He breathed in, and out, steadying himself. Maybe that calmness was merely a survival tactic. There was no telling what it would do, now that it had two days worth of energy. It was probably biding it's time until it could escape. Which, would be perfectly fine, he didn't really care about it aside from his debt.

He placed a chicken leg right under it's head and quickly set to work. He peeled the bandage off from it's leg. Green scales had grown over the wound entirely, a shade lighter than the normal color, without the customary freckles. It was subtle, but he could see other scar-scales just like it crisscrossing the dragon's sides. "So, I guess you are a fighter." He chuckled, nervous.

Something appeared out of the corner of his eye. He whipped his head around in a second. He could not breathe. Unnatural forest eyes stared into him; a claw was outstretched, mere inches from his nose. The boy reacted and jumped back with a resounding "No!"

Back against the wall, Tuulikki exhaled, frightened. The dragon had also been startled; it lost it's balance and fluttered it's wings, trying to sit back down. That was close. The boy picked his way back to the dragon, giving it a wide berth. He noticed that it's water was nearly empty and filled it. The jerky was untouched.

"What's wrong?" Tuulikki shed a glove, picking up a strip, "Don't like it?" he bit into it, then nearly spat it out. "Blugh! Salty!" and promptly took a swig from his canteen. His patient neatly settled down, looking at him again with curious eyes.

The jerky grew strange in his mouth and Tuulikki pulled it out, disgusted. "Ugh, how long have I had this?" He had it pinched between two fingers, dangling just over the dragon's head. It snapped at the soft meat, making Tuulikki jump in surprise. The boy lowered it, and the dragon bit, licking it's lips and swallowing. Immediately, there was a small 'hic', and it's belly and wings fluttered.

Tuulikki realized that this was the same dragon he met in the forest, scared, injured, and above all, not going to hurt anything.

"You're just a little hiccup, aren't you?" Tuulikki teased, biting another hunk of jerky, feeding that to him as well. "That's what I should call you then. Hiccup." The dragon chirruped, maybe out of agreement, maybe just to reply.

Happily fed, Hiccup busied himself by trying to reach the ground from his pillow. He swayed, unsteady on three limbs. Nonetheless, the dragon plodded towards Tuulikki, curious. The boy gave him space, watching.

Suddenly, Hiccup tripped, and his wings spread wide in surprise as he tried to brace his fall. Tuulikki moved before he knew it, catching the dragon's side with his ungloved hand, pulling him upright again. At once, it retreated. Hiccup continued, a little more cautiously

before he stumbled, again caught by Tuulikki's hand.

That was how they made it around the room. The dragon's path was twisted; Tuulikki stooped and stepped around him, hand outstretched to catch Hiccup when he fell. By now, the green dragon was barely strong to stand. The boy, almost in a trance, sat down on the floor, guiding Hiccup into his lap. The weight was comforting, and Tuulikki leaned into the wall, resting his eyes. A claw pushed it's way up his chest, and he opened his eyes to see Hiccup's face, thin and freckled, upon him. A second claw was inches from his nose

He sighed.

and gently, ever so gently, it reached him. The scales were oddly smooth, and warm, barely pressing into the tip of his nose. Tuulikki smiled and snorted, ticklish. Hiccup blinked his forest eyes, moved back down and settled against his stomach with a note of finality. The boy idly petted him, content.

They remained there until Hiccup thought it would be nice to start chewing on Tuulikki's shirt.

* * *

<p>Author's Notes:

I pretty much wrote this entire fic just for this chapter. Don't worry, I've got an end planned, as well as a middle and (what I hope are) plot twists.

Tuulikki's chewing of the jerky was a reference to Toothless's love of upchucking fish. It's customary, when a patient or guest isn't able to chew their food, you chew it for them. Or, you know, put it in a blender or food processor.

Please don't forget to review! Feedback feeds my soul! Thank you all for your support!

Ill

7. Philosophic Predators

**(New Title!) The Dragon Shepherd **

Summary: In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU. Previously titled How to Fight Dragons

Disclaimer: I do not own the characters depicted in this story

* * *

<p>Chapter 7: Philosophic Predators

This was their ritual: Every night, before the last tendrils of light followed the sun, Tuulikki would feed Hiccup, and then they would walk together; the three-legged dragon stumbling only to be caught by the firm-handed boy and set upright. They would talk, about the day,

about what it was like in the forest, about anything.

Hiccup had become stronger; Tuulikki watched him curiously inspect the floor on his own before setting in the boy's lap. Something nagged at his mind, and Tuulikki looked down at the bundle. "Hey, do you have parents? You know, someone taught you how to hunt?" Tiny ears perked up at 'hunt'.

"Oh, who am I kidding, you're wild, your parents probably left you in a hole somewhere." Tuulikki's mind wandered to this afternoon. He had been out in the forest again, for longer this time, searching for more wild dragons. Not because he wanted another, but just so he could find a spot to release Hiccup out to. Just like before, he had no luck. He'd have ask Magnus about it.

There was a chirp, almost like a question, "Well, I just have my Mom left. She doesn't like dragons too much. And Dad, he'sâ€¦gone." There was a string of words on his lips, something that he was about to say, but couldn't. So he said something else. "If you're mom's anything like mine, she'd have torn up the whole forest to get to you." Chuckling, again, Tuulikki picked up Hiccup and held him out in front of him. The green dragon grew limp, but his eyes were still alert.

"I've seen dragons-or at least I think I've seen dragons. What are you? You don't bite, or growl, or throw fire!" Hiccup sneezed, and a bolt of fire nearly hit Tuulikki's shoulder. "Okay, never mind."

Suddenly, the weight on his legs became confining, and the boy wondered, what exactly kept Hiccup from attacking him for so long. His leg was healed, he was mobile, he could breathe fireâ€¦what was it doing staying here? Shouldn't it have gone nasty? Were the scratches really working, or was it just using him?

A growl broke his concentration. The dark boy placed him down in front of his legs. "Where was I? If you don't have parentsâ€¦Are all of those stories about you?"

Another chirp, one that Tuulikki supposed meant 'What stories?', reached his ears.

Despite himself, the boy snickered, a plan forming. "Well, wild dragons are said to be massive," he raised his hands high above his head for example, "with jaws that could break a man in half." he smacked his arms together in demonstration. Hiccup jumped back a little, frightened.

Tuulikki continued, "Their fire burns hotter than the sun," He pointed to Hiccup's flare, which had fizzled out of existence promptly after leaving his mouth, "and the sting of it is felt long after." the glowing embers were snuffed out by a calloused palm.

The boy pushed himself over on his knees, crawling around the dragon, who by now had curled it's tail around itself. "And wild dragons are vicious," He took a step closer to Hiccup, "nastyâ€¦" He rattled the end of the word in his throat, taking another step closer. Hiccup looked as if he would faint. His wings were flapping awkwardly around him, and his eyes were darting up and down.

Tuulikki stared unnerving the dragon even more, "Clever," It occurred to him that Hiccup had very expressive eyes, almost human, in fact. Surely, there was some fear in there. Despite the radical change in the past few minutes, Hiccup did not attack, or even growl. The next words he spoke were emotionless. "Killing machines." The dragon looked like it could barely breathe.

Tuulikki sprang back from Hiccup and landed on his bed, suddenly casual. "And you're a wild dragon, but you aren't like that." His demeanor changed, from predatory to philosophical. The boy placed his hands under his chin, and blinked his eyes, suddenly lost in thought.

Hiccup, bless his little dragon heart, was currently demonstrating his namesake. "Did people just forget that you're a twenty-pound weakling? Or is it 'cause they never saw you - it's a better campfire story if the monster didn't whimper every time someone went near it." The dragon, who had relaxed, shot Tuulikki a glare. Hiccup waddled over to his bed in a huff. He curled up into his pillow, eyes focused on the human.

Tuulikki frowned, matching the glare. "I don't understand. Everything I've heard about dragons is wrong? How's that even possible?" The idea simply frustrated him. What good were people, if they were just going to spread lies like that?

He stared at Hiccup, willing the dragon to chirp up an answer. There was none. Tuulikki reached over to Hiccup's head, scratching a particular spot in-between his horns. "Sorry about the scare." He handed another scrap of goat jerky to the dragon. Hiccup held an irritated scowl for a moment, then eagerly snapped up the treat.

At least he was forgiven. Tuulikki noticed something else; Hiccup was eating hard foods again. That was good.

Hiccup moved himself more towards the window, basking in the moonlight. He raised his claw and mumbled something to himself.

Having seen this before, the boy's frown colored itself with annoyance. "I know you wanna go outside, Hiccup, but not now. It's too late, you'd get lost."

The dragon grumbled in that peculiar way; something like a 'not that, you idiot' but with a warmer tone.

"Well, what is it?" Tuulikki was sure he was becoming mad; talking to a dragon and expecting an answer. But he was pretty sure his mother did it with the goats. It was probably a family thing. He got up off of his bed and settled down close to Hiccup, kneeling on the ground and folding his arms on the windowsill. The dragon, to its credit, lifted its claw up again to the window. Tuulikki was aghast. What was it doing, petting the air? When he said it aloud, all he got was a snort, and he had to bait Hiccup to try again.

He stuck his head next to the dragon's, to see what he was missing. The night air was cool on his face. The trees stood stark black against the deep blue sky. The stars glittered on them, stuck shining above everything. The moon didn't give quite enough light, it was only a crescent, one that Tuulikki guessed was waning. Hiccup's

smooth claw was at his cheek, then it moved up onto the sky, the tip nudging the moon. Another rumble, slower this time, came from the dragon.

"That's the moon, you wanna go see the moon?" Hiccup leveled him a stare full of tired incredulity.

"Okay, so not thatâ€¦is that what you call the moon?" He tried imitating his growls. "Is that it?" There were no other words to describe what happened next.

Hiccup laughed. It was a joyful sound, clear and pure. The dragon squirmed, rolling onto his back, wings flapping in joy.

Tuulikki was less than pleased. He frowned, "Well, was I right or not?" Hiccup rolled over again, still laughing. It became a chortle, then stopped as Tuulikki decided he wasn't having any of this and stood up. Hiccup scrambled back on his feet, keening a sound between 'sorry' and 'I don't want you to leave'.

His eyes are open and honest, and for a moment, Tuulikki was struck again by the color, of every leaf in the forest laid on top of each other. He bent down and scooped Hiccup into his arms. Overjoyed, the dragon licked his cheek. The boy smiled.

"You know, all my life I've been taught dragons are selfish, stupid things, but you? You're not all that bad, Hiccup." He yawned, "I guess it's time for bed." Tuulikki rocked the bundle in his hands, then put him down on it's pillow.

He sighed as he climbed in his own bed. Dragon training was tomorrow, and Hiccup, he was fully healed. Tuulikki decided that he would release him out into the forest afterwards.

That was a shame. He'd just gotten used to green eyes string at him when he slept.

Oh well, he thought, and turned around in his bed.

* * *

><p>Author's notes:Okay, so I really need some help.

I'm gonna make a new summary, and if you could kindly leave suggestions, that would be nice.

Personally, I think that Tuulikki's character is really stretching it in terms of believability in this chapter.

Right now, with what we know about him, Tuulikki wouldn't scare Hiccup at all. However, I really, really like how I wrote him scaring Hiccup. It's dramatic and cute and some kind of perfect. I promise there is a reason coming up about why he was so willing to mess with him but nowâ€¦it just feels choppy to me. He's a jerk then he's a BFF. What about to you guys? Is it awkward? Do you have any tips?

Please don't forget to review!

****Ill****

8. Object Lesson

****Summary: ****In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

****Review Replies:****

****TheDragon1326: ****Thanks so much for your ideas! Some of them I haven't even thought about before. I'll be sure to credit you in the notes if and when I use them. Also, I always wanted random tangent adventures! The best news about this is that I do have a 'Talent X' lined up - it's something that occurred in the beginning, way back when I started writing. But I'm not saying anything because spoilers.

****Guest (who reviewed on 3/8/13): ****Thanks for your insight. I really wanted to keep the power difference the same between Hiccup and Toothless, and tiny!Hiccup is still adorable.

****TO EVERYONE, EVER: ****Thank you for your support and words of encouragement! Here, have an extra-long chapter.

****Disclaimer: ****I do not own the characters depicted in this story

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<p>Chapter 8: Object Lesson

It was barely dawn, the light determinedly reaching though the trees to touch the ground. Tuulikki was following Magnus, intent on getting answers. He hung back, trying his hardest not to be seen, but also trying to be heard. "Ssssssssssooooooâ€|" The boy started casually, "Have you seen any wild dragons before?"

The old man turned around, just missing his charge's face. "No one's ever seen one and lived to tell the tale."

A vain hope brightened Tuulikki's features. He pressed further. "Then how do we know they exist? Why not wolves, or really big owls?"

Magnus stopped and beckoned his charge to come closer. "Let me tell you something no one's ever told you beforeâ€|" Tuulikki quickly stalled, looking carefully into the elder's eyes.

"Shut up."

Tuulikki backed off, frowning. He was quiet for exactly two seconds. "Okay, so if they existâ€|what if you wanted to train one?" He kept on weaving his way in and out of the trees, keeping an eye on Magnus.

He groaned, his staff clattering in annoyance. "Are you insane? I told you, no stupid questions or yer out! What are you thinking of doing?" Magnus, for his credit, kept walking, trusting Tuulikki to

stay with him.

An honest, desperate voice sounded off a little ways behind him. "I just wanna know if-"

"No! Lot's of good men died looking for one of those, and plenty more went mad trying. I thought you knew better!" He caught the tan boy's eyes from the trees, "What's gotten in yer head, boy? Git out here!" Wordlessly, Tuulikki moved in front of him, head down like a child.

"Wild dragons are too dangerous for you - or anyone! Tell me you won't go looking fer one. I wanna hear you say it!"

A quiet, hesitant voice came from the boy. "â€|From now on, I will not think or talk about wild dragons."

"Good! That reminds me - I need to talk to the trainees about something. You'd better listen up as well." He turned away, continuing on as if nothing unusual had happened.

Tuulikki uncrossed his fingers from behind his back.

* * *

><p>"Bye Mom! I'll be back by lunch!" Tuulikki waved over his shoulder. Quickly, too quickly for his mother's taste, he jumped into the forest.

"_Be safe!" Tondra called. She strained her ears for an answer, but nothing came. _

The woman sighed, slumping down beside Hammond, her prize buck. Replaying the moment didn't do her any good. Tondra wondered how it all came to this: a widow at thirty-two, with a full farm to run and a son that didn't want any part of it. She picked up a brush, intent on getting the tangles out of Hammond's coat. "I know I shouldn't be worried, he's a growing boy, he tells me that every day. It's just-I don't know what to do! Tulle acts like he's got the world on his shoulders-it's not, I've checked."

Hammond bleated, stomping his hooves. Tondra had been brushing the same hairs for over a minute. "Oh, sorry." There was an irritated snort. Goats aren't known for their patience, after all. "I thought that Magnus would be a good role model for him, but it's just not working! He either just goes out, or sits and sulks in his room all night!" The woman sighed, again in frustration. "I know Drum would talk him out of it, but he's not here right now, is he?" She would bet her good boots that she could do it, if only she had a wayâ€|

Sighing, she looked at Hammond, who's coat was now a perfect, untangled color of creamy brown. She smiled despite herself, "Oh, you dashing buck! You look like you're ready for a fair! That's it!" she clapped her hands together. "We'll have a family trip, just like old times! It was a good year for the ewes, and I can sell off a few of my extra stock in the next village. And maybe I can get whatever's bothering Tulle out of him! It's perfect!"

Hammond bleated, which she took as an agreement.

* * *

><p>"Welcome back! I trust you all had a fine week with yer dragons."<p>

The teens stood in a haphazard row, with the dragons in their arms only marginally better behaved than before. Tuulikki settled in on the shed's porch with Gobber, bored.

"Now, I have already taught you how to reward yer dragons, and I'm sure that you all want to teach them how to breathe fire on command."

Siegfried suddenly become very happy.

"Before we can go further, however, I need to teach you one more technique, though it's up to you and yer dragon ta learn it. Gobber!"

The dragon grumbled, and, a little absentmindedly, Tuulikki answered back. "Hey, it's not like he can breathe fire. Magnus can't do anything without you."

Gobber turned to him, and Tuulikki imagined a disbelieving look on his reptilian face. "Gobber!" he bolted to his master's side.

Seeing his dragon return to him, Magnus patted his side. "Yer dragon has to listen to you no matter what. You must bond with them to make sure you and only you can get their attention. Why don't you try right now?" He directed the teens to place them on the ground.

After his signal, there arose a clamor. Each teen was calling to their own, hesitantly at first, then louder. The dragons kept looking from person to person, confused.

Bartek, immediately aware of the problem, pulled out a treat from his bag and tried to bait Tuffnut, calling again. The golden dragon wormed his way out of the pile, inching closer to his master. Just as the wormlike dragon was an hairsbreadth away from the boy, Ruffnut attacked. The twin dragons wove themselves into a knot while Bartek looked on in annoyance. Berta hovered over them, the dark-skinned girl trying to separate them without getting bit.

Meanwhile, Siegfried was beginning to get red in the face from all of his shouting. His dragon, Snotlout, had decided it was not worth it and dug himself a pit to sleep in. Astrid went too far the other way. The spiked dragon darted to and fro, not getting close to anyone and quickly tiring herself out. Storm was pouting, waiting until Magnus had the heart to call off the exercise. She started to scratch at her cuticles as she knew that would take a while.

Fishlegs was the closest to understanding, in Tuulikki's opinion. The roly-poly dragon tried working his way over to Cordi, but curled in on himself when the noises became too much. The soothing lullaby that the plump girl tried to sing was drowned out by the ruckus.

Gobber and Magnus sported the same looks of smug satisfaction on their faces. The looks would never quite leave their faces for the rest of the day. "Alright, alright, collect yer dragons."

Siegfried stomped over and grabbed the sleeping dragon out of it's pit by the horn. The cousins began untying their dragons from each other. Cordi's lullaby was heard, and Fishlegs slowly uncurled himself to meet her. Storm picked up Astrid from the ground, scratching her head idly and glaring daggers at Magnus.

"As I'm sure you've figured out, loud noises confuse dragons. The trick is to learn how to command them without too much sound. Start yelling."

The teens complied with less enthusiasm. There was a snap, and Gobber immediately locked eyes with his master. Magnus waved his hand over in a 'come here' gesture. The aging dragon complied. "That's how ya go about it. Practice 'stay' and 'come' on yer own. We'll see how much you've improved by the end of the day."

Tuulikki snorted; looks like there'd be no use for him today. He settled down on the porch, crossing his legs and leaning back on his arms. Maybe he could doze in the sunlight a bit, Magnus wouldn't mind. He closed his eyes.

"Hey! Tutu! Wake up!" Tuulikki woke to a shadow framed by blinding light. It nearly hurt his eyes, and the black form just kept shifting and moving. "We need your help!" the shadow said. He groaned as the light dimmed. Cordi and Storm were standing in front of him. "Are you here, Tutu?"

"Yeah, yeah." He waved the vision away.

"Good. Because now we're a team." Storm took no time in becoming the leader. The girls directed him to their dragons. He stood close, stomping his feet and shouting. Their masters started to signal them. Fishlegs furrowed his scaly brow and quickly rolled away after Cordi. Astrid stuttered, growling weakly as Storm still couldn't get her attention. Tuulikki smiled, now dancing a circle around the remaining dragon.

It was then he realized that threatening a spike-throwing ball of fangs was a very bad idea.

The revelation didn't start all at once, though. She started by snapping at his heels, like a dog. He laughed, making it a game to dodge the sharp beak at the last second. Then, the dragon snarled, a dangerous sound that made the hairs on the back of his neck rise. Tuulikki backed away, but Astrid followed. She quickly jumped on his leg and smashed her tail against him. Tuulikki, for lack of a better word, flailed, hopping up and down on his unoccupied foot. "Gah! Oh gods get it off! Storm, help!" The spiked dragon hissed, throwing itself on Tuulikki's outstretched arm. He started shaking that as well, getting claw marks and spike wounds in return.

Just as quickly, Astrid was baited into her master's waiting arms. The moment of panic ended, and all Tuulikki had to show for it was a stinging arm, sore legs and a bloody lip. Magnus appeared out of nowhere with bandages and ointment. He held out his left arm in defeat.

Astrid was sitting pretty in Storm's arms, not a scratch on her. The dark boy glared at the smug creature. Astrid glared right back. "I

dislike you, dragon." He winced as Magnus wrapped up the last wound, a shallow one near his wrist. If it were any deeper, it probably would've bled for days and days.

"Yer lucky, boy. Astrid's a Nadder, they've got poison in their veins." Tuulikki broke the staring contest, startled, until Magnus continued, "Ah, don't worry, she's hasn't started making venom yet." He was left to sit out the rest of training.

Afterwards, Storm approached him, clearly placing Astrid on the ground before walking over. "Hey. Listen, I'm sorry about Astrid."

He snorted, "Why are you so sorry? _She's_ the one with the problem."

"That's silly. You're talking like Astrid hates you. Dragon's can't hate. They're too simple for that." Tuulikki gave her a strange look before she continued, "Anyway, here." The blonde took a bracelet out of her bag. It was of simple design, a silver medal paired with black hemp. "Give me your hand."

Wordlessly, he opened his right palm. "No, not that, you're other hand, the one that's hurt." She lightly tied the bracelet to his wrist, taking care to tuck the silver medal into the bandage. "This is a talisman, to keep yourself from getting hurt. I want you to have it."

"Uhh, thanks."

Her smile shined brightly. "You're very welcome. Astrid!" The blue and yellow creature darted to her master's legs. "It's time to go. Goodbye, Tutu."

"Bye." And just like that, she walked out of his sight.

He huffed, then walked home, narrowly dodging his mother, who was in the barn, talking to Hammond again. Tuulikki shrugged, he'd gotten used to it, so why not? She's happy, the goats are fine, and he doesn't have to listen to her. He's got other things to deal withâ€¦like that dragonâ€¦which he's going to release today. The teen groaned, pushing open his door. _'Where's Hiccup? He should be on his pillowsâ€¦'_

Looking around, he stepped forward. An indignant shriek came from below. Hiccup was on the ground. "Hey, little guy." Tuulikki reached to scratch him, but the dragon hissed, curling his tail underneath himself.

"What? Are you too good for me too?" Tuulikki slumped down, exhausted. His arm ached, he was pretty sure the wounds would start itching soon, and the knowledge made him even more cranky. "C'mon." he said, though it was more of a moan. He held his hand out, and the light caught the silver hidden in his bandage.

Hiccup suddenly dashed over to Tuulikki's bed, pawing at the blankets. The dragon cried out, anxious. "What-what is it?" he hoped it wasn't another rat. Hiccup would spend hours just _playing_ with it, drawing out it's death. And then he'd drop it in front of him, like an unwanted toy.

Tuulikki wanted to fling his arms out, he only got one. The injured one just stuck out uselessly, palm to the sky. Hiccup reacted nonetheless; The dragon was climbing up his back in a second. Small claws were pinching into his back, and he could hear furious wing beats straining to get higher. Tuulikki stood up, trying to reach behind himself and grab the dragon. Without warning, the room pitched and swayed. The boy stumbled, saving himself by aiming for the bed. Hiccup jumped just in time for his friend to collapse. He landed with an undignified squeak on his left arm.

The freckled dragon was clawing at the ceiling, gripping at the uneven surface like life depended on it.

He stood up, ignoring the dizziness in his head and throbbing of his arm. How he hated to be this weak! The good arm pointed at Hiccup, and Tuulikki opened his mouth to speak.

"Tulle!"

He lowered his voice to a dangerous whisper. "Stay there." He gave the dragon his best glare before stepping out.

Tuulikki pressed the door against his back, forcing a smile despite the irritation. "Hey, mom!" He tried to wave, but it came out more of a half-shrug.

"Oh! What happened to you?" She started picking at the bandages, lifting his arm up, while watching her son grimace.

He hissed, "Ya know, dragon training, just a dragon, it's fine, Magnus took care of it."

"Good. What's this?" With a deft flick of her wrists, she took the bracelet from him. "My my, it's beautiful." The dark-skinned woman held the medal up to the non-existent light. "Easily worth a an old hen, if I'm not mistaken. Where'd you get this?"

"Storm gave it to me, to shut me up I guess. Her dragon attacked me."

"Hmm. Ah, well, I guess this'll be payment for the work you'll miss out on tonight. I want you to get some rest, okay? No stressing those wounds or else they'll hurt." She wasn't looking at him anymore.

"Exactly. Well, I'm going to take a nap." Tuulikki moved to open his door.

"Wait! We're taking a trip! At the beginning of next month, we're going to take a few days trip to Kuniklo. Isn't that great?"

"What?"

"I've been thinking, it's been too long since we've gone on a journey together."

"Why now?" He wanted to know. He knows he can't leave Hiccup alone.

"Why not now?" She said, eyes drifting. "The last time we've been on a family trip-

Tuulikki cuts in, "-is when we were a family. Mom, I don't think-

"You know he wouldn't approve of you sitting in your room sulking either. Or off doing gods-know-what in the forest. I don't want to lose you like I did him."

He knows that day. Some of his father's friends came to the door, with their heads held low. He was off defending the barn from wolves, or maybe just stopping Hammond from getting in. His mother had gotten the news first. All that was left was a boot and a glove, looking like they'd been through the worst. She quickly ran to him, trying to explain, that his father was a brave man, that he had a bad run-in with bandits, that he was a hero

He sighs pulling himself away from his thoughts, and says, softly, "Mom

"Okay. I'll leave you to rest, then. Still on for the trip?" She slowly walks away, regretful.

"Yeah, yeah." Tuulikki called, closing his door. Sighing, he again collapsed onto his bed. Looking onto the ceiling, he finds Hiccup, still there, clinging onto the ceiling like a particularly stubborn stain. "You can get down now." The dragon releases his claws, flapping his wings for an easier trip down. His green eyes wouldn't leave Tuulikki. They were filled with a little bit of curiosity, but also pity. Hiccup climbed up to his friend's bed, getting close. "Oh, what do you want?" He didn't have the heart to shove him away. A claw lightly touched his nose. He smiled, and he guessed it reached his eyes because Hiccup whirred appreciatively. The dragon turned around, dropping down on the floor silently.

Intrigued, Tuulikki pushed himself up on his bed. Hiccup was taking his tail and dragging it along the ground, creating three squares in the dirt. Tuulikki heaved himself into a more comfortable position; the boy laid sideways on the bed on his belly with his elbows bunched up against his sides, head sticking out awkwardly in a position that will cause a pain in his neck if he keeps it up.

In the time it takes him to do that, Hiccup had made drawings in the squares and put himself behind them, opening his front legs and wings, presentational-like. He growled, and pointed to the first square, which had two scribbles facing each other. "Hmm. What's that? Two

Hiccup clapped his paws together in joy, whirring happily. The dragon pointed at the square and growled. Tuulikki copied him, repeating the sounds as well as he could. "That's 'hello'?" The dragon nodded. Tuulikki repeated it, less hesitantly. Hiccup moved to the next square, pleased with himself, working happily with his tail and drawing the next picture.

"_Hello_, Hiccup." He laughed, feeling the strange growls on his tongue. "It's nice to meet you."

* * *

><p>Author's Notes: Kuniklo means Rabbit in Esperanto. Because why not?

Also, there is a hint of diverging canon starting. It doesn't mean that I won't return to Dragon Training, it's just I want more Hiccup/Tuulikki interaction outside of their 'cove', aka Tuulikki's bedroom.

Bartek knew that yelling alone wouldn't work because he lives in a large household; he has to fight for the attention of his parents.

Silver is believed to have healing properties. At the very least, Silver kills bacteria, and liquids stored in silver containers tend to stay fresh longer.

As always, please review!

Ill

9. (Not) Goodbye

****Summary: ****In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

****Disclaimer: ****I do not own the characters depicted in this story

****Chapter 9: (Not) Goodbye****

* * *

><p>When the stars were still in the sky, Tuulikki crept out of the room, to the barn to grab something he needed for today, his shepherd's crook. By all rights, it should've been in his room. He is a shepherd, after all, but he's felt less like one ever since he's met Hiccup. Besides, he didn't quite like it; having it there reminded him how much he needed help standing, like an old man and his cane.<p>

Wielding the shepherd's crook like a spear, he trotted past his bedroom window, peering inside. "Hey, little guy. We're going on a trip." He hooked his staff underneath the dragon and lifted him out of the room. The cuts from yesterday stung, but he was able to get Hiccup down on the ground safely. "C'mon." And in a flash, they disappeared into the forest.

The dark boy relaxed, enjoying the cool morning air and the light coming from above. He checked beside him every once in a while. The dragon walked alongside him easily, blending into the undergrowth like he belonged there. Well, Tuulikki supposed he did, being wild and all. That brought another surge of emotion, and he gripped the

staff in response.

Fortunately, the boy and dragon were at their destination. Tuulikki breathed again, piecing together his composure, which refused to fit right ever since he brought Hiccup home in the first place. Giving an indifferent snort, he tipped his staff over, catching the dragon with the crook and lifting him up in one smooth motion. "Alright now, it's time to go." Tuulikki pointed the staff away from him, maneuvering so that Hiccup was placed on the ground at the point farthest from himself. He withdrew with a quick, "Go on." Confused, the dragon started pawing at the ground. Hiccup stayed, as if on the edge of a cliff, looking back and forth. Tuulikki did something that wouldn't be mistaken for anything else.

"_Goodbye_, Hiccup." It was more like a strangled growl than a word. He tried, at least, to layer in emotion. A bit of sadness, loss, but well-wishing and hope were what he was going for. Little fins picked up at that. Why shouldn't they? He and Tuulikki had been working all night to help bridge the language gap.

Dragonese, that's what Tuulkki was calling it, the speech of dragons, turned out to be fairly simple language. As Hiccup taught him, he noticed that there were very few names for anything. There was a 'yes' and a 'polite no'. Though there weren't many things in the room, Hiccup managed to name 'bed', 'knife', 'water' and 'meat' with relative ease. Gestures made up most of everything else. It was just a matter of learning the different contexts. It wasn't so much as _what_ _sounds Hiccup was making, it was _how_ he was making them.

Hiccup decided then to move closer, snapping Tuulikki out of his thoughts.

"No." The shepherd's crook gently pushed him back. The dragon frowns, pausing for a second. He then gripped onto the wood with his front claws and shoved with his body weight, causing Tuulikki to stumble back. "Get out of here!" He panted between his teeth, shoving the dragon back even farther, "You're free now, now get on with it!" Hiccup dug his one foot into the ground, found that wasn't enough and began chewing on the hook, desperate for leverage. Smoke flared up from his lips and Tuulikki lifted the staff, in turn letting Hiccup dangle like a fish on a line. "You'd better not break that." He threatened. Hiccup squirmed in response, the dragon uttered a daring sound, narrowing his green eyes. He remembered that look.

Late last night, Tuulikki had an idea. "Hey, Hiccup." The dragon had just settled down on his pillows, but kept his head up. "Your name, it's Hiccup. At least, to me it is." He pointed at the dragon, then to himself, "Tuulikki. C'mon, I gotta teach you something. Too-lick-e." There it was, a faint growl. The teenager grew more excited, "Too-lick-e." He tried again, encouraging.

The dragon squinted in determination, lips and tongue curling awkwardly around the foreign sounds. "Too-_hiss_. Tooth-_hiss_." The teen nearly jumped in joy.

"Yes!" He reached over and scratched him, picking him up for good measure and bouncing him like he would a child. He pressed their foreheads together and their eyes locked, mouths split into identical smiles. "You are amazing, little guy." Hiccup trilled, pleased.

He was looking less than pleased right now, grasping at the air, trying to climb up the staff itself. Tuulikki growled, raising it higher. Hiccup struggled, fighting gravity by flapping his wings against the air. Now the staff was upright, and the dragon hung over it like a rag doll, chin barely clearing the gap, front legs hefted over the top, back leg stretched and barely touching the bottom of the hook. Tuulikki's arm was sore, and he was glad to have the weight off of it. Hiccup shifted, keeping his arms up on the top and moving his head down until it was level with Tuulikki's.

The boy and the dragon were eye to eye, staring each other down.

Beads of sweat had matted Tuulikki's hair, making it hang over his eyes. He snorted, taking his free hand and pushing the black mass up, brushing it against his cheeks in the process, shocked to find wetness there. He looks at his palm, seeing tears track across it. Why...what was that doing there? A claw quietly touched his fingers, and Tuulikki followed it to Hiccup's face. The dragon held a sad smile. Sympathy came from those eyes in droves. His vision wavered as he let the claws cup his cheeks and a scaled forehead rest against his own. Relief washed over Tuulikki, at least he wasn't ashamed at the show of emotion. He let his walls break down. "Okay," he half-hiccupped, letting the tears fall, "I'll miss you too." Hiccup purred. They both didn't know how long they were standing, but Tuulikki knew that it had to end soon.

He sighed, gently kneeling down. Tuulikki grasped the dragon's sides to prevent their heads from breaking apart. Hiccup pulled away first, not wasting a second and pressing his claw to Tuulikki's nose. The boy laughed again at the familiar touch. The freckled dragon pulled away, clasping his paws together in a show of nervousness habit. "_So long," _he shakes his head, "_not goodbye_, Tooth-_hiss_."

Tuulikki hugged him extra-tight for that. They part in the morning sun, the boy and the dragon, changed forever.

* * *

><p>He sighs for the hundredth time this morning as his house comes into view. His mother was at the barn, calling at the goats to wake them. "Oh, you're already up!" She looked her son up and down. "Something's differentâ€|" Tondra taps her finger against her chin in thought. "Your arm!" worn hands hover over the newly-red bandages.<p>

"Ah! I'm alright!" He pulled his arms away from her and wriggled them, "See?"

She settled down, smiling, but her eyes were still watchful. "C'mon, the little ones are getting restless. Time for a walk."

An eternity later, though Tondra would insist it was only an hour, Tuulikki was pretty sure the sun had stopped moving. It seemed like the morning would never end; the goats were grazing as they always were, his mother was watching like always, the grass was the same shade as it was yesterday, and the days before. Even the forest had lost its allure, as close as it was to the grazing grounds.

His eyes kept drifting to the V-shaped burn mark left on his staff. It was better this way, his mind said. The lump in his stomach disagreed. Another eternity lost in thought, and his mother decided to change what eons told him was the truth. Tuulikki followed her, moving to the back of the herd and guiding the animals back home.

An inhuman shriek came from behind him. His breath caught in his throat for a second. He reacted, "Mom! Get them out of here!" He hurried the goats along as fast as he could, checking behind him into the shadowy forest every second or so. He sees a figure in the distance and gasps, turning around to face the trees and brandish his staff.

At that moment, two dragons dived out of the undergrowth, one chasing the other.

He recognizes both of them.

* * *

><p>Author's Notes:

What's really weird about this chapter is that my original plan was that Tuulikki didn't cry until Hiccup had leftâ€|whoopsmyhandslipped. I guess that's what happens when you write while listening to love songs (and ship Toothcupâ€|but no one asked that).

Oh, and yes, Hiccup is trying to say 'Toothless'. It's the little details that I like.

Well? How do you think it's going? Please review and tell me your thoughts!

Ill

10. (Not) Hello

Summary: In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

Disclaimer: I do not own the characters depicted in this story

* * *

><p>Chapter 10: (Not) Hello

At that moment, two dragons dived out of the undergrowth, one chasing the other.

_He recognizes both of them. _

Tuulikki sprinted to them, crook raised like a broom ready to swat anything thrown at it. The creatures were running so fast they almost blurred into the landscape. The predator was thick and barrel shaped with heavy ridges of deep emerald-turquoise across it's back. It's wings were blunt, awkward things that looked like they were barely attached. The same could be said about it's oversized head and jaws

filled with small, sharp fangs. Of course Tuulikki didn't notice this right away, he knew this dragon, just as he knew the one it was chasing.

Inwardly, he sighed in frustration. '_Just when I think I was outâ€|'_ Outwardly, a smile tugged at the edges of his mouth.

The two dragons continued, too concerned with chasing and/or staying alive to notice the teen. Hiccup dashed back and forth in the grass, using his small stature to evade the bigger dragon's chops. Tuulikki took advantage of their distraction and shouted a name.

"Alvin!"

The barrel-chested dragon yelped, tripping over himself and grinding his jaw against the ground. His brown-black eyes were anxious, but the fear burned away into anger when he saw Tuulikki coming. Alvin let out a low, treacherous growl and the boy's hands tightened on his staff in response. "Heel, Alvin." He prompted himself to stare, hoping his acid eyes would stop the beast, at least until his owner came. Tuulikki quickly glanced up, scanning the trees for the hunter that was not far behind.

That was a mistake. Alvin took his chance and tackled the teen, pressing his heavy claws over his chest and stomach. Tuulikki had reacted instantly, shoving his staff lengthwise into Alvin's mouth and pushing with all of his strength, preventing the dragon from bearing down closer. The boy's lungs felt like they were going to explode, given the weight and the adrenaline rush. Hot breath rushed out of Alvin's nostrils, making the teen wince. His arms felt like there was fire boiling beneath them. He suddenly got this feeling that Alvin was smiling. Sure enough, he saw his staff wedged in Alvin's mouth start to glow dimly and a faint crackling reached his ears. He squirmed more, desperate to shake the emerald dragon off, twisting his head and shutting his eyes, whispering, '_please, please this can't be the endâ€|'_

In an instant, the weight was lifted.

Then it came back twice as harsh, crashing against his bruised chest. Vivid green eyes burst open at this, brain taking a few seconds to process. A stripe of dark red bloomed under the dragon's left eyes. Alvin released the staff, turning away to an unseen enemy. The pain lingered as the claws left Tuulikki's chest. Blood rushed though his ears as he breathed, blocking out the howling coming from his left and the sharp command following it. The boy's head was swimming, the fire bursts underneath his eyelids making him groan. A figure stood over him, the shadow causing momentary relief from the sun.

"Hello, Tuulikki."

He grunted, knowing this man, having expected him since he saw his dragon, "Wally, what's going on?" his voice was accusing and more than a little irritated.

Tuulikki tried getting up, first by trying to get a purchase with his feet, then trying to use his staff to hoist himself up. The pain proved to be too much and he decided to sit cross-legged until he could breathe again. That was a shame. Tuulikki wanted to stand and

face Waldorf Irving once and for all on his own two feet. He settled for glaring, taking in what had changed since last summer.

He was dressed in thin leather armor, with dark red spikes on his shoulders and forearms contrasting with his amber skin and long black hair. His legs were fully covered in dark pants, odd for this weather, but not so odd to Tuulikki. Everything about that man was pointed, it seemed. Angular chin, sharp cheekbones, thin nose, Tuulikki was even sure that his fingernails grew in spikes. Despite his appearance, he had a soft voice and was considered very polite. That combination alone gave the midwives' days worth of material. Apparently, he came from a mining village down south, and, eager to exchange the pickaxe for a dagger, became something of a prodigy.

"You interrupted my hunt." The elder said as if it was Tuulikki's fault, jerking him out of his thoughts.

"You scared my flock." He deadpanned. "You and Al here." He jerked his thumb to the beast, who was then looking pointedly at the grass, growling a little.

"His name is Alvin." Waldorf frowned, but an icy smile replaced it. "And besides, I thought you were giving up the whole shepherd thing. I heard that you were trying to train a _dragon_." The lean man pushed up his face close, leering with his pale blue eyes. "You should leave that to the professionals." He pulled away and casually patted Alvin's head, making it bounce. The dragon let it slide, still focusing somewhere far away.

"Oh, is _that_ a dragon? Looks more like an overgrown sausage to me. Is that mold?" Despite his better judgment, Tuulikki crept closer and poked at Alvin's green-blue scales. He was nearly covered in earth, like he'd been sleeping in a mud pit. Underneath that, though, were thoseâ€¦spots? A quick snap of the jaws made him shy away.

"You don't know when to stop, do you? Just like your father." The spiked warrior turned away, as if dismissing him, like a giant would a gnat.

The thought struck a well of hatred in the teen. Words failed him. He growled; a low, harsh sound that even Alvin noticed. A sharp squeak came from behind Tuulikki and familiar claws raced up his back to his shoulder. Hiccup had returned, hissing and spitting at Waldorf, green wings flaring.

The hunter stepped back at first, but a smile tugged at his lips as he said, "Tuulikkiâ€¦Be very still." He yanked off a 'spike' from his forearm and inched closer.

Feeling his sudden courage end, Hiccup yelped and dived into his friend's shirt. The dragon curled around Tuulikki's bruised chest, making the teen wince. He had to think fast. Wally wasn't going without that dragon. The scared thing was even shaking beneath his shirt!

The hunter was coming even closer, "Now, I might have to cut up your shirt a bit, sorry."

Protective instincts took over. "Wait! He's-he's my dragon." The

words were out in the light. They felt right, so he said them again. "Hiccup is my dragon."

"He can't be yours. I found him out in the woods."

Feeling braver, Tuulikki picked at his shirt, causing Hiccup's head to be revealed. "Well, he likes to go for walks, don'tcha boy?" He smiled, and with lack of other options, he rubbed his cheek against the frightened dragon. Tense claws grew relaxed in his grip, and a simple purr confirmed it. A warmth, not entirely caused by Hiccup's body, spread through Tuulikki.

Seemingly baffled, Waldorf backed off without another word.

"C'mon Hiccup, let's get inside." With a few heavy breaths and a little encouragement from his passenger, Tuulikki was up and walking away. "See you around, Wally." He called behind him.

Suspicious, and puzzled, Waldorf and Alvin left as well, disappearing into the forest.

Dodging his mother turned out to be a very simple task indeed, and soon, Tuulikki crashed on his bed, taking care to not squish his companion. A horned, green head poked out of his shirt. "Well, I guess we're stuck with each other now." A tiny, rough tongue licked his chin in agreement. His midsection, where overlarge claws had beaten into him only a short while before, had warmed. Tuulikki was content to lay there, with Hiccup at his side, for the rest of eternity.

Then a gurgling sound came from his belly. "Whatâ€¦you're such a killjoy." Carefully, he disentangled himself from the warm bed and dragon. "I won't be gone for long."

Dodging his mother yet again, he must have good luck today, Tuulikki brought a bread roll, two smoked sausages, and a small block of cheese into the room. He settled on his bed, giving a sausage to Hiccup and watching him carry it to his little pillow.

Seeing the little beast finally relax made the teen feel guilty. "Sorry about Waldorf. He's reallyâ€¦" Tuulikki searched for the right word. Bloodthirsty? Horrendous?

"â€¦Intense." he chose.

Hiccup's fins extended and his eyebrow rose, as if to say, 'Really? Wouldn'ta guessed that.'

"Well, he wasn't always like that." He stuffed a bit of cheese into the bread roll and took a bite, mostly out of a sudden grouchiness. "I guess it happened when we met. My Dad wanted a big brother for me, I guess. It didn't pan out." By 'didn't pan out' he meant 'it was a complete disaster'.

"I was learning traps at the time. Wally just happened to be walking byâ€¦he got his leg trapped in one of mine, screamed like a monster had got him." He held up his hands and shaped them into claws and shoving them together like fangs would, "Ended up with all of these wicked bruises like something big had taken a bite." His expression changes into something indignant. "And he comes after me like it

was _my_ fault that he wasn't looking where he was stepping!
Honestly, he should be glad that the bear trap wasn't sharp."

He picks up his sausage, chewing on it, his face less bored. "So, on and on, he decided he doesn't like me and that's fine 'cause I don't like him that much either. I haven't seen much of him since he got Alvin. Probably training him." Tuulikki shrugged. "I've seen Alvin before, though. Once or twice, Never that close, though. Hehe." His chest prickled at the small laugh.

Hiccup nodded, "_Know_ Alvin. Issssâ€|" his lips puckered, trying to find the syllables. "Tray-Torr. _Bad dragon_." His head bobbed up and down, impishly agreeing with himself. Then, it stopped, his eyes wide. "_I is_â€|" he gurgled something Tuulikki hadn't heard before. His head dropped, sausage forgotten. His whole body drooped down, green scales going limp.

"Hiccupâ€|what's wrong?" Tuulikki stepped up from the bed, coming closer. _'Was there something in the meat?_' he wondered.

Hiccup only responded with a small mutter, flicking his forest eyes up to Tuulikki's acid ones. "Issssâ€|weak."

He could not believe it. "What? Why are you saying that? You're not weak!"

The dragon picked up his head, suddenly angry. His words were twisted and raspy, full of pent up anger. Tuulikki could barely tell what he was saying, most of it flew by him.

"Hiccup _promised_, that next time they meet_, Alvin_ would pay. _Hiccup_ wouldn't be _scared!" The dragon quickly slumped, as if the speech had taken all of his will, "Hiccup was scared. _Ran_."

"Well? So what?"

"Alvin _Bad Dragon! He-_ " The dragon caught himself, "Hiccup _must become strong, like _Tooth-_hiss_. Tooth-_hiss_ not scared." Hiccup's eyes were bare and honest.

Tuulikki was caught unawares. There was a person, no, _dragon _that looked up to him? He wanted to tell Hiccup that no, that he was scared when Alvin attacked him and he was scared when Wally was talking to him, and even scared when he brought Hiccup home for the first time. But he knew that saying that wouldn't help. He needed a proper role model, someone likeâ€|ohwhocares, just not him!

A small voice, timid, a little strange, broke through his panic.
"Teach Hiccup how to be strong?"

A loud voice, one that boomed, confident in words, came out of him.
"Sure. I'll teach you."

A quick jump later and Hiccup was in his arms, happily thrumming a warm tune, oblivious to the anxious, and afraid look on Tuulikki's face.

"Yeah. I got this."

* * *

><p>Author's Notes:

I'm so glad that we made it to this milestone! Yay 10 chapters!

Yo, **TheDragon1326******, **I** got the antagonists!

Alvin's dragon form is based off of the Red Death/Queen Dragon from the movie. He's about 30-40 pounds, which is why Tuulikki's so beat when he got sat on. I'm pretty sure that he's gonna hurt for a while. Nothing too plot-threatening, though.

You know, if you look at Alvin's design for Riders of Berk, he's got a scar under his left eye. I took one look at that, and I'm like, _'Yeah, Hiccup totally did that to him.' _and I made it so. I love being god of this little universe.

Wal**d**orf. W**hispering D**eath.** I r so cleaver! Heehee! Ya know, if I was writing Riders of Berk, I totally would've given Mildew the Whispering Death. They just kinda match. Lean, smart, grudge-holding, and have lots of spikes in the design. Ah well. Alvin the Treacherous is still a good match anyway.

BTW, I was half-going to have Hiccup say, "Notice me, Sempai!" But then I'm like, no. This isn't a Toothcup fic. Bloody fingers won't listen to me when I say, 'NO ROMANCE!'. Maybe it's because they don't have earsâ€|

Anyway, please review!

Ill

11. A Week in Moments

Summary: **In** a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

Disclaimer: **I** do not own the characters depicted in this story

Warnings: **There** are goat droppings and dragons peeing in this chapter. Just thought I'd cover my bases, I mean, bodily excretions haven't been mentioned before in this fic, mostly just glossed over, soâ€|just a warning.

* * *

><p>Chapter 11: A Week in Moments

Hiccup nudged at Tuulikki's heels, asking the question with his eyes. "Oh no, not today. I can't let Mom see you." Little green scales furrowed, and he started slinking around the floor, stalking an imaginary enemy. A shudder ran through his body and he pounced, silver-grey claws catching nothing but air. Bright green eyes looked to Tuulikki for approval.

The teen sighed, shoulders dropping, "Fine. Just - be

quiet."

Tuulikki stepped back into the meadow with a little green shadow following after him. He held a bag, and a small shovel. Wrinkling his nose in disgust, he leaned close to the ground, searching. He hated this job. Spying a pile of goat droppings, he dug his shovel under them and turned the pellets over, mixing them with the dirt. He did the same to the next pile he found, but the third he piled into his bag.

It was important, his mother insisted, that he let Nature have enoughâ€|uh, fertilizer. That didn't mean that they couldn't control where the droppings end up. Whatever he collected would be put in the garden to help the vegetables grow. It was tedious work, but it would be worth it once the harvest comes in. Tuulikki scowled as he looked around for more, catching a glimpse of Hiccup.

He was still, kind of crouching like he was going to pounce on something. Looking around, Tuulikki couldn't find what he was aiming for. Stepping closer, "Hiccup, are you alright?" Forest green eyes snapped to attention, shocked.

It was then he noticed the growing puddle of yellow stretching its way out from under Hiccup's body. Having one leg provided an easy window and Tuulikki instinctively looked up, to beholdâ€|well, something he was pretty sure he shouldn't. Blushing a deep red, he quickly turned himself away, "Well, at least I know that you're a boy now."

A squeak resounded. A few sharp growls punctuated Hiccup pounding his left claws across his heart.

"Whatever you say, little guy."

* * *

><p>He's not sure how it happened. Actually, he's plenty sure, but he doesn't want to admit it. It started when the teen was sitting on his bed, playing with his shepherd's crook. He made it a game, ages ago, to try and get his staff as close to the ground as possible but not let it touch. He didn't notice a green head following, fins standing at attention.<p>

The dragon quickly jumped from off of his bed, making the teen pull the staff up. The freckled dragon looked up, pitifully reaching at it with his claws. Still bored, the teen moved to another part of the floor, watching as his friend dived toward it and pulling it out at the last second.

The teen laughed, and the dragon squeaked in frustration.

Letting the hook touch to the ground for a third time, he smiled, confident. A pair of jaws snapped onto the edge, tugging sharply and gaining more ground. Another laugh, "Okay, bud. Let go."

The dragon didn't let go.

The teen, agitated, tugged on the staff and got a growl in response. "C'mon." he tried harder, making the dragon dig its way down into the floor, hissing in protest.

"You know what? Fine!" he tossed the crook over to the floor, making the dragon flop over backwards to keep his grip.

A happy 'murr' resulted. The teen leaned over his bed to find a pleased dragon with his jaws open wide, staff held in-between the back teeth by a combination of gravity and careful grey claws. Slobber dripped down the length, making the dull wood shine in the afternoon light.

There were no more fights over the staff after that.

* * *

><p>It was a bit unwieldy, but as hastily cobbled together firing ranges go, Tuulikki would have to say that the one in his room was one of the better ones. Besides, that wasn't the problem.<p>

The problem, delicately put, was Hiccup's aim. He couldn't fire straight to save his life. The shots veered to the left or right too many times to be compensated for. After the third pile of clothes was set alight, Tuulikki shrugged and grabbed them all, telling the dragon that he'd be back as soon as he figured the damage.

After about an hour, he returned with a basket of freshly washed shirts, waiting to dry. The dark teen looked in the window, checking in on Hiccup. His wings were folded, and his head was turned from the light. Tuulikki's brow crinkled. What was wrong? Hiccup didn't stay still for long, he was always looking, poking, prodding, and finally chewing if the first three didn't work out.

Tuulikki hurried and hung the clothes out to dry, worrying. When he came back, he took out his knife and held it up to the light. He aimed so that a little dot of light appeared on Hiccup's claw. The dragon picked up his head, intrigued as the light moved away from him. He followed, slowly, cautiously after it.

Tuulikki quickly flicked his wrist, quickening the movement of the light. The freckled dragon dived after it, clawing at the ground in a fervor. He moved it to the wall and Hiccup darted away, suddenly energized. He 'caught' the light with his paw, and leaned in closer, inspecting the phenomenon. A forest green eye found the source, wincing at the rays directed into it. Confused, he snarled, pulling away to see Tuulikki, smiling and laughing. He broke out in a toothless grin and ran to the window, fluttering his wings to gain air and tackle his friend.

Hiccup felt a comforting arm around him, "_Thank you._"

Tuulikki didn't understand, but smiled anyway.

* * *

><p>The afternoon is broken, as always, with a knock on the door. A tumble of claws ran to the door. A sharp 'crack' of a green head on wood and Hiccup was still pushing, squirming, digging to get out.<p>

Tuulikki carefully wedged his foot in-between his friend and the exit, urging him with his eyes to stay quiet. "Yeah Mom?"

"I need you to go down into the cellar. We can probably sell off a few things from there."

"Okay." He pushed Hiccup away from the door using his foot pressed against his small chest. Quickly, he barricaded the door by using his back, facing the deprived creature. Lines of upturned dirt were coming from Hiccup's claws, as well as soft, dangerous growls. A small trail of smoke danced around his pointed mouth. Tuulikki swore he smelt it before it reached him. "Heyâ€|Mom." He said, attempting to move out of the way. "It's getting kinda smoky in hereâ€|did you forget about the bread again?"

He heard nothing for a second, then a gasp and a flurry of footsteps. "Gah not again! Get some peaches okay?" She called from far off.

"Okay!" he shouted. Irritated, Tuulikki dropped his foot. Hiccup jumped over it, nosing at the door again. The teen grumbled, "_Stop_. Could you please justâ€|" The scratching stopped, and Hiccup turned, giving a pitiful look. "Alright, just, stay out of sight." Tuulikki stuck his head out, then propped the door back open. Hiccup crept quietly out, cautiously being opposite of what he was before. Emerald wings quietly fanning out, he took a few steps into the hall, looking out where Tondra had been. The teen was already in the open, moving to the cellar. "C'mon."

Beside the entrance, there was a candlestick and lamp, one which was a spare. Tuulikki chose the lamp, lit it, and heaved up the heavy door. They tiptoe down the stairs, lamp quietly illuminating the space. Grey claws clinked after soft footfalls, and a little green head swayed from side to side, listening. The cellar was a small room built into the earth with sturdy wooden planks keeping the dirt from retaking the room. Large shelves lined the walls, filled with jars whose surfaces reflected the lamplight eerily. Hiccup hissed, hearing the distant squeaks of rats.

Tuulikki placed the light on the table, immediately moving to behind the stairs to grab a big burlap sack. He moved to the jars, mumbling, "Okay, so peachesâ€|and anything else that looks good." The teen fiddled with the jars, moving some, tilting them frontwards and backwards before grabbing them for more viewing in the light.

Hiccup, meanwhile, was engaged in a very different search. His apple-green scales flickered in the soft light as he waited, muscles tensed. A pointed, furry face peered out of the darkness. Hiccup pounced, a second too late, as the rat narrowly dodged his claws and disappeared into a hole in the wall. The dragon growled, sticking his paw in and failing to grasp anything. He was laying there, enjoying his spectacular failure when a voice broke through the semi-darkness.

"C'mon, bud." Tuulikki had filled the sack and hoisted it carefully against himself. Little fins picked up the sounds of jars clinking against each other. They ascended without the light to guide them. Tuulikki disappeared from Hiccup's sight for a minute, putting the bag down before turning back. "Got one more thing."

They traversed the stairs again. In the back corner, separated from

the walls by heavy stone, there was a chest. Tuulikki set down the lamp and cracked it open, wincing a bit at the smell. Hiccup was beside him, peeking curiously in, claws tapping the lip of the chest. Inside were a few potatoes and onions, specially placed for one thing. A knife was procured, and it was used to prod the vegetables into turning over, revealing a strange, bluish-silver fungus.

"There we are." It was almost ready, in fact. Tuulikki used the knife to cut some of the blue parts off and set them aside. This particular mold, one that his family had been cultivating for a good half-century now, was used for healing long, shallow wounds. In some time, the silver growth would turn completely blue, and either him or his mother would harvest it, dry it out in the midday sun, and take it to the local medicine woman. Then it would be crushed into a powder, mixed with other herbs and water to make a poultice.

Now that Tuulikki thought about it, that would have probably helped Hiccup. He turned to the dragon, fungus in hand.

Hiccup flinched and growled, back arching. His eyes were locked with Tuulikki's palm. The teen moved it, experimentally watching how Hiccup was worriedly tracking it with his head. "Okay, so you don't like it. Weird." He got up and grabbed another bag from the stairwell, conscious of forest eyes on him. Hiccup only relaxed after the offending mold was out of sight. He wouldn't even be petted with the hand that held it. That, actually gave him an idea.

"Alright, let's go."

They ascended, both a little wiser.

* * *

><p>Author's Notes: Bit of trivia: I wrote the basics of these before I started the fic itself. I was trying to get a feel for the characters and see if I could understand where they were and how they were going. Right here, right before the travel arc and right after Hic and Tulle decide to stay with each other, that's where I wanted these to take place. It doesn't mean that they're not important.

The first part: Sorta obvious allusion to picking up after your dogs while on a walk.

The second part: Dogs will eat anything. ESPECIALLY the things you keep out of reach. EVEN MORE ESPECIALLY the things you tease them with. Personal connection: replace the staff with my fingers and you have a normal Saturday at my house.

The third part: Hiccup has self-esteem issues, no matter what body he has.

The fourth part: I'm sorry if my portrayal of basements is wrong. I grew up in a house without one. And a mold like that, probably doesn't exist in real life. I just made it up for the sake of the plot. Please don't go around spreading mold dust on open wounds.

Please review!

****Ill****

12. Groundwork

****Summary: ****In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

****Disclaimer: ****I do not own the characters depicted in this story

Hey, 54 reviews and 54 followers! Thank you all!

* * *

><p>Chapter 12: Groundwork

Hiccup awoke to rustling bedclothes and the stars barely winking in the twilight. A sleepy face stooped to his level and pleasant scratches accosted his head. "Bye, little guy. Off to training." The shepherd's crook was placed next to him.

Heavy footfalls disappeared from him as Hiccup struggled to move his limbs from comforting numbness. He waddled down his pile of pillows, eagerly moving the door aside. His hooked nose poked out into the hall, looking left and right. In a hot minute, the dragon was tumbling down the cellar stairs. Hiccup spit up a fireball into the center of the floor, lighting the room with a crackle. The dragon moved under the stairs, pulling a sack from the pile and placing it near the fire. There he sat, waiting. There was confused squeaking, then a quick rush of air and a crunch. Hiccup carried the dead rat to the fire and dropped it, licking his lips and going for more.

Soon, he had a pile of freshly dead rats, mixed in with one unlucky rabbit. With sure motions, Hiccup pushed the kill into the sack. Dousing the fire with his wings, he clambered up the stairs.

Within a minute, he was jumping out of Tuulikki's window, bag firmly set in his jaws. A wing flap later, he was already in the forest.

* * *

><p>Magnus was directing the training again today, standing the teens and their dragons at attention as usual, with Tuulikki in the background, sitting on the wooden shed's porch, as usual. "Alright, alright. Now that you've all had yer dragons for a while, is there any questions you have?"<p>

Siegfried replied, "Uh, yeah, I'd like to return mine, he can't breathe fire." Snotlout, who up until now had been holding his head up proudly, yelped and toppled over on the ground. "See?"

"Ah. Yes. Well." The man causally walked over to his apprentice, seemingly forgetting something. "Ah, yes!" He clocked Tuulikki over the head, "Stupid boy! You let me forget!" Magnus hooked his staff around the teen, dragging him to the line.

He stepped in front of the group, commanding the silence. "Now, I'm

sure the excitement has worn off by now. That's normal, it happens with everything. So ya think yer a horribl' dragon trainer, and you keep thinking that stupid thought and come across the idea that it would be better if ya just left it alone. 'Nature's furnace', you say! It'd probably burn the entire forest down n' have a better life than you could ever give it, right?" His voice turned sour.

"_That_ is where you've gone wrong." His staff gestured at each of them, teeth clattering heavily in the silence. "Dragons - especially trained ones - are selfish creatures. That's usually nothing to worry about, but in this case, it's deadly. Trust me, I've seen it happen before. These dragons you have, they've only known humans. Their hunting instinct is long gone, so they wither and die out there, alone and starved. Taking these dragons doesn't just benefit you-it's a responsibility."

Tuulikki was taken aback by this information. Stunned into silence, he could only stare out and fathom what Hiccup might've become without him. Thankfully, he was snapped out of it by an irritated voice.

"Yeahâ€|but Snotloutâ€|" From the sound of it, the ginger was out of it a little, but recovered.

"Will be fine! A little tipâ€|wet a dragon's head and it can't light it's fire. He's got a problem with drooling, that's normal, his dad had it, he's got itâ€|just gotta wipe his mouth before attempting any fireballs, is all." Siegfried nodded, relieved, grabbing Snotlout from the ground.

"Okay, ya brats, let's see if we can try for some tricks this week."

* * *

><p>Tondra was a smart mother, and she knew her son well. She knows when he's hiding something, especially when he hasn't been sleeping, don't think she hadn't seen the shadows under his eyes or the midnight snacks he'd been stealing. And now that he was out for the morning, the Goat herder decided some snooping was in order. She crept to the door, frowning at the wood. She tapped it, wriggling it free before grasping it and moving it away.<p>

_Oh. _She thought. _That's what he's been keeping from me._

* * *

><p>Tuulikki shuffled apathetically over to his home. Today's training wasn't that entertaining. Mostly it was trying to stay away from Astrid and Storm, who were working on 'flirting', whatever that meant. There were a few scratches and bruises and even a poisoning, but it was quickly taken care of, much to Tuulikki's disappointment.<p>

He was glad to know that the mold on his arms worked in keeping the other's dragons away from him, though. He had rubbed a little on his hands as an experiment, though he missed Gobber sitting next to him while he scratched on his head, he didn't miss Astrid's spikes. As if reminded, Tuulikki went and scrubbed his hands with dirt, just in case Hiccup needed scratching. He frowned when he reached his home,

noting the lack of greeting from his mother. "Mom! Are you here?" he called.

"Yes. Over here." Her voice was sharp and commanding, and it struck Tuulikki like a lightning bolt. He scrambled over to her, mind racing. What could he have done while he was away?

He found her, or rather, he found them, one sitting at the table, holding a broom and pushing the other back. "Son, how long have you tried to keep this from me?"

Tuulikki's thoughts, jumbled already by his teenage mind, were dropped in panic. "Ummâ€¦what, Mom?"

"Nothing happens on this farm without me knowing about it." a heavy silence preceded a gulp. "Now, let's talk about that dragon."

"What dragon? I don't see any dragon." he said, casting his head around nervously.

Tondra fixed her son with a dry look and sighed, lifting up the broom. Hiccup was hanging on it like a wet rag, chewing on the straw end. He gave a happy gurgle, pleased to see his friend. Tuulikki glanced back at his mother. "Nothing happens on this farm without me knowing about it."

"I-I" He looked between the two, and Hiccup slipped a little, showing off his rounded hip where his leg should've been. The detail rebounded in his head. "I was gonna tell you, I just needed more time." Tuulikki gathered Hiccup from the broom and in his arms.

"Tell me what?" She winced while he scratched at a few loose scales.

"Well, he just healed up. A few weeks ago, a merchant from another village brought him by. They didn't want a dragon that was stupid enough to get caught in a trap. See?" He let Hiccup lie belly-up in his arms, pointing out the near-seamless scar tissue. "His leg's gone." Another flourish should do it, she's a sucker for sad stories, "Magnus was going to kill it if I didn't step in. So, I took him and patched him up. I'm not even sure if he can fight, Mom, he's harmless." he held him out to her, and Hiccup completed the look with a hopeful growl.

"â€¦Really? Harmless?"

Tuulikki nodded, and by some strange power, his dragon nodded with him. "Mmm-hmm. Totally. And I have picked up a thing or two from Magnus, you know."

Tondra looked over the two with curious eyes. "Have you introduced him to the goats yet?" That was as good as a yes.

"No."

"Well, come on then. Let's see what they think." She turned and walked out.

Tuulikki bit down on a sigh of relief. They weren't out yet. Feeling

stupid with Hiccup in his arms, he gave the dragon a quick hug and put him down. "Nothing to be worried about, really."

"Stupid?" a high pitched voice squeaked. The teen looked down at the dragon, with a curiously pitying face.

"Sorry. Just a lie. I needed her to like you. Sorry that I said it." He said it in clipped, careful tones. "We've gotta hurry out."

The outside was welcoming and bright, a nice change from the cool house. Tondra was standing right outside the barn doors. A stomping, impatient goat was beside her. She stared down the approaching dragon, "Show me what you got."

Hiccup padded closer to the goat, cautiously placing his talons down softly on the ground as not to startle. He emitted a small, soft growl, one that Tuulikki knew before thinking about it, 'peace, I am a friend'. A snort from the goat was all that was returned. Curious, Hiccup paced around it's cloven hooves, seemingly inspecting as if it was worthy of friendship. A silver-grey claw was extended to a furry snout, and, to everyone, that was that. Getting the confirmation, Hiccup immediately climbed up the goat's side and settled on it's back, curling himself into a little green ball. He shot a quick look to Tuulikki who was stunned, "_See? I'm doing great!_"

His mother, watching the affair, was even more impressed. The widow picked Hiccup up, prompting the dragon to go limp in her arms. She poked at his mouth, encouraging a gummy smile. "Well, isn't he sweet?" Tondra was letting Hiccup play with her fingers, and the reptile was doing his best to keep up, pawing at the air. Tuulikki knew from the look on her face that he wasn't just sweet.

He was _adorable_.

* * *

><p>Author's Notes: I was a volunteer at an animal rescue group. I think my training and opinions show through Magnus's speech, don't you?

Huzzah for another alternate beginning! And, yeah, Hiccup is immediately endearing to everyone he meets. He kinda deserves it, considering the back story I just decided on.

Please Review!

Ill

13. In Transit

****Summary: ****In a small village, raising dragons for fighting is typical, expected even. But when a local outcast befriends one, it's up to them to find out why. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup
AU.

****Disclaimer: ****I do not own the characters depicted in this story

* * *

><p>Tuulikki groaned, waking up in the middle of the night. He shifted, adjusting his testicular implant-<p>

furious backspacing

Now back to our irregularly scheduled fic! I am so sorry for the wait!

* * *

><p>Chapter 13: In Transit

The ranch was in a flurry of movement for days after. Tuulikki was up from dawn until dusk, too busy cleaning the house, arranging the bags, and planning out meals with his mother to notice the days pass.

The teen was so distracted, that Hiccup had to remind him about his promise to help him become stronger. He brought it up each night, asking for him not to forget like a child waiting for a bedtime story. And Tuulikki did have a plan—he hoped. But for now, it was time for dragon-words and late night stories of men in moons creating grand quests and fanged creatures waiting to be tricked out of their gold by witty heroes.

It dawns on Tuulikki that this is his way of protecting Hiccup. The dragon was his, all his and he was not letting him out of his sight again. So, he tried to tell him it subtly, a little teasing about his weight, a fable about a quick-thinking boy verses a demon, a few more brush-offs about training.

That didn't work. Hiccup ducked and squirmed about whenever he was outside, bringing back trophies of his deeds to his mentor. First it was rats, buckets full of goat feed, dead rabbits, and even a badger! Tuulikki didn't even want to know what he did to get that. Badgers are scary things. And one day, Hiccup decided he would stick by, watching how the shepherd tended to his flock. A different tactic, Tuulikki supposed.

Forest eyes watched carefully as a crook carefully nudged a goat in the back of the herd, causing a chain reaction and making the group move left onto the path.

A draconic snort; he could do better. Without a word from Tuulikki, he dived in. Hiccup was a natural, darting underneath hooves and boots alike, weaving through the crowded field and controlling it with choice nips and growls.

The show made Tuulikki think, and one afternoon he found wooden stakes and gathered them beside the house, taking them one by one and driving them into the ground near each other in a circular area. At one end he placed Hiccup, and at the other end he placed a piece of cooked rabbit. "Okay, now." He clapped his hands together, "Go and get the food. Find meat."

A quiet growl resounded, and Hiccup tilted his head in confusion before padding around the stakes. "No no!" Frills shot up in shock. "This way." Rough hands plucked him up and put him in the path again, "You go through it." Worried, Tuulikki moved to the plate. "C'mon." and he gestured again for Hiccup to come.

Green brows quirked, and the dragon twisted and wove through the stakes, getting caught once or twice, but reaching the end unscathed. He growled once before being presented the rabbit. "_Why_"

Tuulikki hesitated, looking left and right for any signs before growling. "Training. _Stronger_? _You _wanted to _become stronger_"

Hiccup squinted a little, swallowing the last of his treat. "_Yes_. Butâ€|strong, not fast!" The word come out like a child's again, and it almost hurts Tuulikki to deny him.

Those eyesâ€|he could see himself behind them. A seven year old, one who wanted to follow his father no matter what happened, had that look in his eyes once.

"Wellâ€|" He knelt down, slightly embarrassed. "Strength is not just about being able to lift heavy things. It's about being strong up here." Tuulikki poked at Hiccup's head, where he hoped the brain was. "And knowing what you can do better than anyone else. Now, I saw what you can do with the goats; let's try to see you top that."

Hiccup huffed, sputtering again, squinting his eyes at Tuulikki like he couldn't believe him.

"Hey. I've got hope in you. Why don't you have some in yourself?" He scratched underneath Hiccup's green chin, unsatisfied with the frown that was etched there. The dragon whirred, at least distracted from his nonsense answer. He tries again, baiting Hiccup to go through the stakes once more. A tail curved, as the dragon moved through again, this time faster.

Tuulikki counted that as a win.

* * *

><p>The persistent 'swish' of water-soaked rags intrigued Hiccup, and often he wandered to the barn, where Tondra was hard at work washing her flock. The dark human had tilted her head at him more than once, a curious glint in her eye.<p>

Not long after, Tuulikki came by, smiling a little too wide, carrying a foreign word on his tongue. "Bathtime!"

Hiccup crawled on his shoulder, watching intently as his human laid out a few towels and washcloths. Calloused hands set down a metal tub half-full of water, then carefully lifted Hiccup off of his perch, leaving him knee-deep. A quick squeak, and the dragon looked up at Tuulikki, eyes full of loss and confusion. Despite himself, the teen snickered. "You know, I used to be bathed in this bucket. My mom has, my aunties have, I think even my grandfather." He swiped a cloth into the tub, wetting it and running it over Hiccup's sides, clearly practiced. The dragon squirmed, quietly protesting until something spilled, unbidden, from Tuulikki's mouth. "I guess that makes you part of the family now."

Somehow, the air became heavier, and if Hiccup could look up, he could've seen a forgotten frown on his friend's face. Hiccup noticed the change and did not fight as Tuulikki picked up his talons and

scrubbed in-between them, the missing leg barely touched. Deft hands carefully lifted up wings, stretching out their membranes and getting into the cracks. Even his face wasn't spared. A heavy towel draped itself onto Hiccup, and he was lifted out of the tub, snorting and sputtering.

Once on solid ground, he shoved his head into the towel, roughly drying his head. A small hiss made Tuulikki back away for a moment. Hiccup looked at a dripping paw, studying it before opening his mouth and nearly covering it with a white-hot flame. He did the same with the other paws, pausing a little at the stump before swallowing the fire down. Chirping happily, he turned to Tuulikki.

The teen laughed, "Missed a spot!" and threw his towel, covering Hiccup and rubbing him down and tickling him to boot. "Good boy!" The dragon jumped on his chest and started covering his face with a joyful tongue. They collapsed in a pile of sputtering human and energetic dragon.

A tapping sound jolted them out of it. Tuulikki bolted upright, bracing an arm and preventing Hiccup from flying off of his chest. He looked up into the brown eyes of his mother, who had walked in.

"Mmm-hmm?" She tapped her foot again, not amused.

"Hehe. Hey-" His voice jumped up and down octaves like a grasshopper, "Mom, whatcha doing here?"

"Just thought I'd warn youâ€|Cordelia and her mother are at the front door. Better make yourself presentable soon orâ€|" the threat was spelled out in the silence.

He heard. "Right! I'm just going to put Hiccup down for a nap, he's not really ready to meet other people and he's actually pretty tired from his bath-" Tuulikki stopped himself from fake-yawning and instead picked up his dragon in a rush. "See you soon!" and he was out of the barn, walking at a brisk pace beside the back of his house, escaping sight.

With a hush and a, "Stay quiet!" he dropped Hiccup into his room. Oh no, he didn't want him to be discovered, not yet. He had tried so hard to keep Hiccup from his mother, he couldn't let it happen again. His newly-discovered protective side was not liking this. Not to mention, Cordi wondering where Hiccup came from. Nope. The dragon in his room-what dragon? was officially not there today, nope!

Besides if Cordi's mother knew, then he'd have to kiss Hiccup goodbye for sure. That woman would talk and talk and by the morning the whole town would know.

Slipping into the front door was easy as cake. Inside, Tondra was setting tea mugs on the kitchen table for the guests, who were already sitting.

"Hey, Mrs. Lear. Cordi." he gestured to the round dragon in his friend's arms, "Fishlegs." the round dragon buried itself deeper in his master's arms. "What's going on with him?"

The brunette girl shrugged, "I don't know."

Tondra seized upon the chance, "Why don't you both go outside and check him out. Tuulikki's been working with Magnus for the past month or so, maybe he has an idea." As bad as their verbal communication was, their non-verbal communication was pitch-perfect. Tuulikki nodded, going along with it. "Leary and I have a lot to catch up on, I'm sure you don't want to get in the way of our gossip."

"Oh, okay then." Shrugging, Cordi was led out into the grasses. The sun was high in the sky, and the wind was barely there, tickling their noses cheekily when they'd least expect it. The plump girl sat her equally-round dragon down, sitting against the fence in abject boredom. Fishlegs was whining, a thin, wavering sound that did not match his body. "Oh, what is it now?" the dragon shrank back, now silent, at his master's irritation.

Sensing the tension, Tuulikki tried to reason, "Soâ€¦Fishlegs! How's it going with the little guy?"

"Not well. He whines whenever I put him down. Magnus has checked him over, said that it's normal, but that was a few days ago and I'm wondering when it stops." the brunette pouted.

"Really?" Crouching down so that Cordi wouldn't hear, Tuulikki murmured a low, crooning sound, making the round eyes of Fishlegs follow him. "Hey, little guy," He was really trying to be nice, though, Fishlegs was about twice the size of Hiccup and goodness knows what'll happen when he gets mad, "I'm not gonna hurt you." He reached out a hand to the dragon's pebbly snout and let it be sniffed. With permission granted, the teen scratched under Fishleg's chin, remembering the spot from before. He easily toppled, rounded yellowish belly bared to the sky as Cordi looked in awe.

"Didn't know you could do that."

"Me either." Okay, so Fishlegs was relaxed now, but that didn't explain the problem. "He whines when you set him down?"

"Yeah."

"Well, have you checked his feet? Could be a pain in his leg. I've had kids who bit because of much less." He prodded at the dragon's thick feet, checking for thorns, but his leather scales were unharmed. Tuulikki's efforts even brought forth a snort of draconic laughter. "C'mon, let's try somethingâ€¦_hello_." He growled.

Cordi leaned over, "No, that was the first thing I checked, I swear."

Fishlegs looked up at him strangely, whirring. "_Helloâ€¦_"

Good; contact established. "_What going on?_" he growled low, trying not to draw attention to himself.

The round dragon squirmed. "_Itchy. New skin_. _Help?_" Tuulikki nodded, feeling along his sides for little grooves in Fishleg's scales. He picked at them, rubbing while the dragon purred in appreciation.

"Awwâ€|He's a real sweetie. Shoulda known you'd choose him." He dug a little deeper, "What's this?" Tuulikki peeled back a thin scale, showing it off to Cordi, who gasped.

"Oh, Fishy! You're molting! No wonder you're so cranky!" a second pair of hands joined in, scratching eagerly at the scales., making them fall like autumn leaves. Fishlegs just smiled wider.

Tuulikki stepped back as Cordi cradled her dragon close. "Well, my work here is done!" He said mostly to himself. "I should get a side job - Tuulikki the Dragon Whisperer!" he held his hand out as if to grab the title and stuff it in his pocket.

The girl snorted in disbelief, then looked down at her bundle. He voice grew quieter than usual. "I kinda feel bad for you. Lost you chance because of Astrid."

"Nah, it's fine, none of the dragons really liked me anyway. Even if I'd spend the whole day there. 'M better off alone." The lies tumbled out, though they didn't feel like lies.

He watched the plump girl frown, looking for words. "â€|I've seen you in the forest. No one's supposed to be in there alone."

"So what? What's wrong with some walks? So I can't enjoy nature?"

"No! No!" she sighed, "It's just, there's something terrible there." He answer was clipped and short, like she was repeating it.

"What?"

"Family secret. Can't tell you." Cordi frowned again, focusing on the ground. "just, be careful out there, okay?"

Just as he was about to answer, Leary called for her daughter. Cordi gave Tuulikki a worried look and followed after her. "I'll see you later, okay Tulle? Thank you!" Fishlegs gave a hearty farewell as well, squirming against his master's chest in thanks.

He let his mouth split into a smile. "You're welcome!" and waved.

* * *

><p>"Alright, let's get this show on the road!"<p>

It would figure that his mother was a morning person. She pranced out of the front door like she was a little girl again, brandishing her staff like a king's scepter. Nearly jumping for joy, she opened the barn, letting the goats wander out into the open air. He best buck Hammond by her side, Tondra led the herd down the path.

Tuulikki took the wheel-cart up behind him, like a horse would, if they had a horse. It was another Tanner family tradition, borne from the need of a cart and a tight hand on the purse-strings. Goats were not especially suited for this job - no matter how much Mom insisted on it. The last time he hooked up something that was not equine to this thingâ€|it wasn't good.

Hiccup climbed up to the handle, nose pointing straight ahead, wings spread as if ready to fly away into the trail. The pre-dawn air was chilled, making Tuulikki shiver as he re-checked the luggage. His dragon was close by, alert, studying the tree line as the goats disappeared behind it.

It was decided that Tuulikki and Hiccup would bring up the back, and his mother would lead the front, and somehow they'd all make in one piece. The first leg of the journey was boring, a long slog through heavy woods and well-traveled paths.

Hiccup constantly jumped back and forth between Tuulikki's arms and the cart itself, looking back to see if anything followed them. Restless, the dragon settled on riding on one of the goats backs, picking up his head every once in a while to see where they were headed. Soon, the woods thinned out into grasslands, and Hiccup decided to pad alongside Tuulikki, occasionally climbing up the back of the cart and sitting, thinking thoughts that no one was privy to but himself.

Lunch was had on the trail, and another leg later, when the sun was disappearing the approaching mountain, Tondra decided to stop for camp. Tuulikki grabbed the stakes and rope on top of the cart and constructed a make-shift fence in the middle of the meadow. Hiccup herded the goats in without instruction, which made Tondra pause, but she soon forgot it when dinner rolled around. It seemed like to Tuulikki a blink of an eye they were settled into their blankets, fire already at a cinder.

He shuddered in his sleep, recalling a long-buried memory. It was him, and his mother, in a glade like this one. He was small, and his mother was big and holding his hand like she used to do before he asked her to stop. They were crowded around a small mound, freshly covered with a new wooden stake presiding over it. A quiet, tired sob reached his ears, and the child knew without looking that it was his mother, faced again with the fact that she was a widow.

He checks the cross again, remembering what it meant. That his dad is gone, that he'll never hear his belly-laugh, get swatted for not doing chores, or hear his stories and songs ever again. It hits him hard, and the boy grips his mother's hand tighter. The revelation, that these memories were all he had left, prompted him to recall the last words that they shared.

A quick chuckle and a warm dismissal, "_Ah. No no no, ye can't come. I'll be huntin' dragons._" And the boy thought and thought about it, and the pieces fit, so he came to a realization.

Dragons.

They did this. All of it.

Tuulikki gasped, jolting awake in the night.

Hiccup was curled against his belly, wings rising and falling with every breath. The teen shifted to get a better look at the creature. So small, and so smart, and so kind. He couldn't. He wouldn't. As if hearing the thoughts, Hiccup awoke, or perhaps he wasn't sleeping, and growled, wondering what was going on.

"_Bad dream._" Tuulikki allowed himself to relax, "_Go back to bed._" he hissed, more to himself.

And slept on through the night.

* * *

><p>Notes: Why was this such a pain to write? I blame summer starting, then summer school. A pain, but a legitimate credit in one month instead of nine is way better.

Anyway, that fake out in the beginning is a reference to _The Decoy Bride_, a British rom-com starring Kelly McDonald (Merida from _Brave_) and David Tennant (Narrator of the HTTYD audio books and Spitelout, Snotlout's father). It's appropriate, I swear. Good film, too.

Mrs. Leary is a reference to Shakespeare's King Lear, who had a daughter named Cordelia.

Some of this stuff I'm writing, I feel like I'm just trying to shove fluff in your faces. That's not bad. I like writing fluffy cute stuff. The world needs more cute, right? Right?

Please, review!

Ill

14. Games of Chance

**(New!) Summary: **At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking them closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

**Disclaimer: **I do not own the characters depicted in this story

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><p>Chapter 14: Games of Chance

Kuniklo was a small trade town, barely bigger than their own. The only reason that it thrived was because it was the only connection between the deeper forest towns and the more civilized world. As such, the town has good trade and even a marketplace where any temporary sellers can set up shop. They were headed there now, the goat herd and its caretakers.

Tuulikki got out the wooden stakes again and made another makeshift corral while Tondra and Hiccup were out feeding. The teen sighed and settled down in the dirt. This was always the worst part of the trip. Too tired from traveling and too wound up to rest, he sat against the fencepost, resting his eyes for a minute.

A sharp pain on his stomach jolted him awake, forcing Tuulikki to look into the eyes of his draconic companion. He yapped, skittering up and down his friend's legs. Hiccup didn't want to rest, it seemed. "Okay, okayâ€¦" Tuulikki stood up, "Mom, Hiccup's too excited, I'm

going to see if I can tire him out." Receiving a nod in return, he stood up roughly, leaving Hiccup to follow on foot.

The early birds were up already, setting up their tables with bright cloths and brighter wares. Most eyed him warily; teenagers were likely to steal, not buy. He passed by them, searching for a specific person. Tuulikki's eyes lit up when he found them, calling out, "Terah! Jam!" when they hadn't noticed.

The merchant Terah looked up from his bag, smiling at his old friend. The dragon on his shoulder, Jam, gave the impression of the same approval.

Distracted by his thoughts, Tuulikki didn't notice a green tail wrapped around his ankle. He noticed when he was tumbling down into the dirt, though. A deep voice broke through the cloud of dust. "Ahh, Tuulikki, you never change." the teen propped himself up on one arm after hearing that, hand cradling his chin, looking up at his friend.

Terah was short, looked as a young child would, but could've been as old as Tuulikki's father, if not older. Rumor has it that was cursed to that size when he stole Jam from an Eastern merchant. Dressed in the calming greens and browns of the forest, he was someone that you would overlook if not for his size and wit.

Jam was at his side, sniffing curiously at Tuulikki as he did every time they met. Snakelike, and without wings, he was like no dragon he'd ever known. He had a mane of pure white fur lining his head and down his deep-sea blue body, as well as two long, golden whiskers that reached from nose to tail. Jam's fangs were mere inches away from Tuulikki's nose, but the teen was used to that.

Tuulikki looked up at Terah, "Huh. I don't remember you being this tall." Hiccup had decided to make himself known, jumping on the teen's back and hissing.

"And I didn't know you had a dragon." Terah chuckled, moving to scratch at the green creature. Hiccup growled again before letting a little finger tickle under his chin. "Strange days, eh Tulle?" The teen reached behind himself and held onto his dragon while he stood up. Hiccup rearranged himself, sitting tightly on Tuulikki's shoulder like he was born to.

"Very strange." he looked behind Terah, or rather over him, to catch a glimpse into his stall. "Whatcha got for today?"

"Nothing but entertainment, I'm afraid." The dwarf pulled out four tin cups and a turquoise stone from his bag. "Want to help me practice?"

Tuulikki couldn't hold back his smile. "You're on!" True, in all of his 13 years of playing this game he's never won a single match, but that only means he can get better. Terah even knew not to bet him. The dwarf's nimble hands swapped the cups, easily keeping track of the stone through years of experience from both sides of the table.

Tuulikki tried hard to concentrate, focusing in on the one cup and trying not to blink as it morphed and changed around with the others.

Hiccup was watching from his shoulder, he knew. As soon as the warped cups regained their natural shape, he chose.

Terah clicked his tongue, "Nope, not close." he lifted the one on the end, revealing the stone. "I'm not even sure you're trying."

Another round.

"Kid, yer looking seasick."

"Again." the teen ignored the water in his eyes. But Terah shrugged and the tin cups ran under his hands like frightened mice under a lion's paws. Tuulikki tried to keep his eyes open the whole time, but failed. His head swayed only to be steadied by Hiccup's claws on his back. "Ughâ€|" he forced his eyes open on the cups. Hiccup had climbed down his arm onto the table. The bright green blob of dragon was reassuring, and he pointed to a cup.

"Nope." the resulting 'whump' his forehead made when it hit the table was the final sign of defeat. Hiccup patted Tuulikki's head in an effort to comfort him. He turned to the cups, picking one up with his deft claws.

"Well, it looks like someone's lucky today!" Terah laughed again. "He's real smart, ain't he?"

Tuulikki's only answer was a groan. He stood up, shoving Hiccup in his arms in a show of irritation, while the dragon squeaked in protest. "Welp, you'd better get him out of here, don't want a genius dragon showing up my usual customers." the dwarf reached for Hiccup again, scratching at his head. "Tell your mother hello for me, okay?"

The teen shrugged, "I will." he said, if only out of politeness.

"Until next time, then."

Tuulikki had turned away, giving Terah a half-hearted wave. No matter how much he liked playing the game, he always had a headache after. A nap was in order, he decided, somewhere far away, where little green creatures wouldn't bother him and chew on his favorite shirt. Speaking of little green creatures, Hiccup had settled comfortably under his crossed arms, nearly smothered by the dark fabric until only his front legs poked out. He often growled and pointed at the stalls like a child, asking without words if he could get a closer look. Tuulikki complied, drawing him close to the tables, ignoring the strange looks of the vendors.

In all honesty, he was distracted when he nearly tripped over Waldorf in the marketplace. Hiccup jumped out of his hands, running at full tilt toward Alvin, and Tuulikki had to follow. Of course it was time to bump into his rival, earning a few scratches from his armor and making the hunter drop his bags.

After the customary 'oh, I'm so sorry for crashing into you, here's your stuff back' dance that he pretty much memorized by the time he was 7, he dived again for Hiccup, who was currently staring Alvin down.

Waldorf was quicker, though, and a squirming, angry pile of dragon was dangling from his fingers. He leaned his face in close to Hiccup's, stalling him for a second. "Well, well, look who's out of the shirt. I wasn't sure if your mother would let you out." Waldorf's eyes flickered to Tuulikki. "He's such a worrywart sometimes."

The glare was returned as well as his bags, minus a few rats that were inside them. Hiccup was dropped, thankfully he landed on his feet and started baiting Alvin again. "Hey, Wally." Tuulikki said absentmindedly, bending down to pick up Hiccup. The green dragon batted his hands away, still hissing.

"I thought I told you never to call me that."

"Maybe I forgot."

Gritting his teeth, Tuulikki forcibly grabbed Hiccup from off the ground, ignoring the squirming in favor of getting a handle on the situation. He growled again, hoping that Waldorf would think Hiccup was doing it. Tuulikki looked up, only to find another leery smile from Waldorf, "Little tyke's got fire in him, I like that. Where'd you get him?"

He was about to open his mouth when Hiccup batted at his face. Realizing the question, he laughed, "Where'd I get him? Ah ha ha _no_ I'm not answering that. Trade secret."

"Really? Because I've been digging around - nobody's sold spotted dragons in ages. Or even heard of one until I showed up. Have anything you'd like to confess?" The last word was punctuated by a little 'click' of one of Waldorf's spikes removing itself from his armor.

"I'll say again, trade secret." Hiccup started growling again, begging to be thrown into the fight. Tuulikki's breath hitched, and he started thinking aloud, "Besides, Alvin's spotted and you don't seem to be worried about that. Where did he come from, if I may ask?" he let his fingers fall on his knife. It was only fair, seeing as Waldorf was covered in them. "I mean, he's really big, for a dragon, anyway. You sure he isn't a wild baby? Sure acts like one."

There was a quick change in tone, he talked quicker than normal. "Alvin isn't a baby anything!"

"Prove it." For a split second, Tuulikki panicked. C'mon, he thought, don't call the bluff, don't make a scene, be the gentleman you are and stop this crazy show of masculinity. Alvin can't mean that much to youâ€¦

"Fine!" Waldorf glared back dangerously. "Alvin! Let's get to the arena. And, so you don't chicken out-" the teen roughly grabbed Tuulikki by the shirt, making him drop Hiccup again, who may he remind you is raring for the fight.

Being dragged to the town arena was less than pleasant; even when his feet decided to move, his shirt was still being stretched out to its limits. Hiccup was right beside him, shouting in dragonese about how he was going to wipe the floor with Alvin. He could practically hear the other dragon's eyes rolling in his head. All six of them. There was still time to stop this. "Do you really want to start this now?"

Right before lunch? I know I'm pretty hungry, what about you and Alvin? Don't you want to get something?"

"I'm not hungry, and besides, Alvin won't mind once he gets fighting. Though, if things get too rough, Hiccup will do just fine." Tuulikki sucked in a breath. He wouldn't—his eyes quickly flickered to Alvin, who was leisurely stomping into the arena. Hiccup sped in after him, flaring his wings and moving impatiently.

If he was honest with himself, it was then Tuulikki started praying. But he's stubborn, and only thought of it as vainly trying to impose his will on reality. To keep his spirits up, he tried to think of ways that they could escape with minimal damage to themselves and their reputations. Maybe if Hiccup would stop being so overconfident, maybe if he played dead, or faked an injury, or just stopped because there's no way his training had helped him with things like this, but there's no way he could tell Hiccup. Not with the crowd that they were gathering. He looked again at Hiccup, at least trying to voice his thoughts with a single look.

Hiccup stared back, defiant. He didn't know how, but he knew that his dragon wouldn't back down, not for a second. _'Fine.' _he thought, _'If Hiccup wants to die pissing off a massive dragon, it's better that I help him get some good shots in than worrying.'_ With that, he grunted, pulling his shirt away from Waldorf and slamming his forearms down on the fence. "Git 'im good Hiccy!" he shouted, waving his fist around in an impression of Magnus.

Hiccup swung his head around chirruping and nodding happily. Alvin immediately attacked, taking Hiccup down in a full-body tackle. Tuulikki winced in reflex, watching as his dragon was pinned down underneath a mass of brackish-blue scales. Hiccup wasn't done, though. He quickly wormed his head under Alvin's massive jaw line and started biting the weaker flesh. In response, the elder dragon clawed at the wings stuck flat against the ground, making Hiccup chomp down on Alvin's throat.

He thrashed about, tossing his passenger into a fencepost. Hiccup struggled to stand, lifting up his wings and inspecting the ragged edges almost sadly. He hissed, turning to face Alvin and digging his paws in. Alvin stood, growling something only he knew before preparing a fire blast. Hiccup snorted, shooting a small fireball into the elder's mouth. The fireball ignited, blasting the insides, making Alvin cough and sputter out smoke. Hiccup did his own laugh, then gasped and narrowly dodged the rush to attack him.

"Hmm, not bad." Waldorf was commenting all throughout these events, making Tuulikki's hair stand on end. "Don't tell me it's your first fight, c'mon, Tulle!" noticing the look of exasperation, he probed further, "What, your dad never took you to one of these? Musta been a boring childhood."

Tuulikki tried to ignore Waldorf, concentrating on Hiccup dodging every swipe of Alvin's claws. The smaller dragon was slowly getting tired, not that his cocky smile was showing it.

It was the last comment that made Tuulikki do it. He said it in such an easy way, almost if he didn't notice that he was insulting anyone. "Your Dad, wow, no wonder he didn't teach you about this. Must of thought you weren't cut out for this business, and I guess he was

right, the way you're fidgeting like that."

Later, Tuulikki would look back on this and think that maybe the first punch should've landed in the stomach, but the jaw was a much more satisfying target. "Gr-oh! What's gotten into you, short stuff?" he noticed the acid glare, "Huh. Never pegged you for a family honor type, really. Figured you would just run off on your poor mother one day, never to return." He smirked, reaching for one of his knives.

Tuulikki was quicker, stepping forward and grappling Waldorf's chest, collecting his long hair and yanking on it. He made a fist and started pounding in between the armor, where it was weakest.

Drummond was not as soft-hearted as Waldorf thought. When he saw that his son was slight and bony when he himself at that age was stout and thick, he decided to train him in the 'shadowy' ways of fighting. Drummond taught to cause as much pain as he could in the least amount of time. Where every advantage was taken because he knows he can't win on strength alone. Each hit to Waldorf's chest was like a balm to Tuulikki's bruised ego and his smile grew bigger with every wheeze.

Maybe that's why he was caught off guard. Waldorf struck him on the cheek, making him lose his grip on his spiny torso. He was still yanking at the hair, which caused both of them to lose their balance and fall, Waldorf on his front side and Tuulikki on his back. A heavy growl rang through the dust, causing both teens to turn their heads back to the arena.

Alvin himself was howling, bucking and thrashing his way to them. Hiccup was on his back, his jaws clamped around the base of a wing and holding on for all he was worth. Alvin hit the fence posts, bursting through them in a panic. Hiccup loosed his grip, dropping off to the side with a whine. Without thinking, Tuulikki barked out a "_STOP!_" in Dragon-tongue and shut his eyes.

He heard heavy thudding, a quick squeak and a pressure on his stomach. The first thing he saw was green blue scales scarcely a fingernail away from his nose. Alvin's claws had been embedded into the earth, and the dust clouds made his eyes water and throat constrict. Tuulikki turned his head away, back to the blinding-white sky, blocked by a familiar shape. Hiccup chirred, licking his friend's cheek absently in a gesture of calm.

A shadow stole Hiccup away. Tuulikki tried to move, but his weak arms failed him. He flipped over, dropping his grip on Waldorf's hair and grabbing Alvin's jaws tight, trying to force them open, hissing some meaningless Dragonese in panic. Hiccup was there, right there, squeezed tight and pleading again with his eyes for safety. Tuulikki's arms burned trying to provide it and his throat grew raw while muttering curses and pleadings all at once. Alvin narrowed his six eyes in hatred, jaws tightening just a little closer together, and Tuulikki swore his heart stopped beating.

"Alvin! Drop it. Now. We won." Murky brown eyes flickered over to his left, where Waldorf was standing, a little worse for wear; commanding despite his cough.

Hiccup was released, and he bolted away onto Tuulikki's arm and settled on his shoulder, where he promptly started growling and hissing at Alvin. "Hey, heeey, bud." the teen reached around and scratched in-between Hiccup's horns, "Don't do that." Tuulikki felt like sighing in relief. He could see new scars and bruises from this close, but Hiccup was whole, much better than being lunch.

Now to deal with Waldorf. Tuulikki shrugged, acting undisturbed. "Well, you got a fightâ€|" he said, holding his arms out.

"That's not what I was talking about, Tulle! You're such a stupid little kid! Can't you see that having that dragon-it's not fun and games or anything like that! You thing something like Hiccup is going to survive out there in the tournaments? Are you crazy? You don't even know what it's like, Tuulikki!"

The words struck a nerve; and it was a sudden rush of all of the terror and fear he had to deal with since Hiccup started the fight, "â€|of course I knowâ€|" a braver, more powerful voice stirred from inside of him, "That's why I'm not gonna give up. Hiccup can be a great fighter, I know it. Maybe not in the way Alvin is, but, hey, he got a few good licks in, right?" he checked those forest eyes before turning and glaring at Waldorf, "So either help me or stay out of my way, and don't you ever talk about my father like that again." He turned and left, leaving Waldorf to stare, disappointed, at his trail of dust.

They stepped away, back to the cart and back to a familliar setting. Tondra fretted around them, alternating congratulating them on their fighting skills and making them swear not to leave the cart again. Tuulikki still hadn't lost his lightheaded happiness, the kind tha comes with being victorious, so he smiled and joked along.

The day passed quickly after that; several people came past to see the dragon and trainer, who had settled themselves in front of the goats like boulders.

The time came to leave the marketplace for the trail.

The path and dusk wore about the same, except that Hiccup had settled across his shoulder, wrapping his tail around his neck for balance. Tuulikki could hear his breathing and quick, sudden heartbeat, which was strangely calming. Hiccup himself was strangely focused, growling in such a way that he could barely keep up. The dragon kept looking at him as well, as if worried.

They reached the edge of the grasslands in record time, and again it seemed his mind slipped off until the family was at rest. Hiccup had barely left him. There was a rustling, and Tuulikki could've sworn that he saw a red flash of something in the trees. Hiccup whirred, looking back and forth before snatching up a pile of goat jerky and taking off into the forest. He looked back only once.

Tuulikki hoped it was just firelight shining back in those eyes.

* * *

><p>Notes: â€|You know when you're so far into outlining the story, and you have to go back and write the stuff you need to before getting to those parts? Yeeah, that's this chapter.

I'd already referenced it in previous chapters, and I'm too lazy to change them, so this is just me taking my lumps and getting a good chapter done. Plus more foreshadowing!

New Summary! It's kinda more mythological then I intended, but since there's little to no chance of a fighting subplot/tournament arc, the last one didn't fit anymore.

Making Terah and Jam actually made the chapter much more enjoyable, for me anyway. They're supposed to be the equivalent of Trader Johann.

Terah is just an OC based on a Terrible Terror. He's not a mythical separate species kind of dwarf, he's just a really, really short human. His name means 'wild goat' or 'station' in Hebrew, which fits with that he travels a lot. I feel like he met Drummond when he swindled him out of most of his earnings when they were young.

(I realize that I seem to use 'T' names a lot. Tuulikki, Tondra, Terahâ€|someone give me a smack when I make another T character, okay?)

The name Jam is the Persian form of Avestan _Yima_, possibly meaning either "twin" or "river". In Eastern folklore, dragons are connected to rivers, and it had been said that dragons are the spirits of rivers.

Oh, and Hiccup is telling a story to Tuulikki on their way back home. It's a good story, I think, because it's _his _story.

â€|And I am so sorry for the wait. (and hey, 3 months? That'sâ€|pretty long. *frowns*)

****Ill****

15. Questions

****Summary: ****At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking them closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

****Disclaimer: ****I do not own the characters depicted in this story

(So apparently monthly updates are a thingâ€|?)

* * *

><p>Chapter 15: Questions

It was just barely dawn at the Tanner household when they returned. The family moved together in happy silence, putting the goats away and settling back home like clockwork. The only problem was a sentence, thrown in the air, breaking the mood like a lightning bolt.

"Where's Hiccup?"

Tuulikki looked up, distracted from unloading the cart. "Ummâ€¦he's probably in my room. It's been a long trip, I mean I'm sure Hiccup needs some rest."

"I didn't see him this entire morning. I need to talk to him tooâ€¦" She frowned slightly, her voice trailing off.

Tuulikki shrugged, figuring it was just another quirk of his mother's to try and speak to a creature so unlike her. Then he remembered that it was in the family. "Don't worry, Hiccup can take care of himself. He's not a kidâ€¦I think." Tuulikki finished emptying the cart and wiped his hands together. "Okay, that's done, anything else?"

"Don't you have training today?"

He stared at her in disbelief. "Wha-nooâ€¦" Skeptical, Tuulikki counted the days on his fingers. Green eyes widening, the teen bolted off, yelling that he'd be back whenever.

Tondra smiled warmly back at her son.

Unsteady and out of breath, Tuulikki scrambled his way over to the Arena. The other students were paired off, dragons already tussling in the dirt. He tried to slink closer to his usual spot by the shed, but Gobber tackled him. Tuulikki rubbed his head, cursing under his breath. "Nice to see you too," he grumbled to the old dragon, scratching under his horns. He blinked and looked at the other people in the Arena, who were staring at him in abject wonder and awe.

"Ah! There you are, Tuulikki!" Magnus called him over, oblivious to the respect being projected onto him. Tuulikki stood up, smiling sheepishly back. "'A've got something for ya." he moves past and digs up an old, leather-bound book from under the porch. He hands it to him, "Though you mi' not need it, consid'renâ€¦"

"What?" Tuulikki glances over the book, wondering how long it was under there before Storm cut into the conversation.

"Wow! I can't believe you did that!"

Bartek and Berta jumped in, "Yeah, your dragon sounds so cool!"

"Dragon? What are you talking about?" Tuulikki said, starting to panic. How could they know? He'd been so careful! The other teens were getting close, really too close and he could feel his heartbeat in his ears again. He reflexively grabbed for Hiccup, but all Tuulikki could really do was twist his fingers around in his shirt nervously.

"Don't play dumb," Siegfried grumbled, "That dragon you got in Kuniklo. The one that got a hit on Alvin the Conqueror."

Another dagger of panic slashed at him. "That was-that Alvin?!" He'd heard rumors, at least, of a very vicious, dangerous dragon cakewalking it's way through the tournaments, but he'd never realized - He reeled from the implications of Hiccup surviving, no wait, practically winning, a fight with Alvin.

Alvin, who before was just a bad-tempered sausage, was now a dragon-killing sausage in his mind. The idea made him fall on his sore backside for the third time today. The other teens continued their crowding, providing no escape from the questions.

Fortunately, Fishlegs in all of his pudgy glory waddled near him and settled down at his thigh, barely even flinching when Tuulikki picked him up and petted him. Though the texture was all wrong, the motions were calming enough for him to focus.

He recalled someone asking about Hiccup, and he numbly said in response, "Well, I left him home, he was still pretty tired since that fight." Picking himself from up off the ground, he tried for another topic, "How have you guys been?"

Bartek immediately turned to Siegfried, "Betcha his house gets burnt down by the time he gets back." there was a few quickly-shushed snickers.

Storm had not taken up the distraction so quickly, blue eyes shining with admiration. "How'd you do it, Tulle? First Astrid didn't want anything to do with you - then you healed Fishlegs -"

"I wouldn't call it healing.."

"- Now you've got a loyal fighter at your side! Just what did you do?" That question sparked the group's interest in him again and he had to contend with the curious faces of his peers.

Magnus was also very interested, "How'd ya do tha', anyway?"

Tuulliki shifted his feet, trying to think of something other then, 'I totally went behind everyone's back and got myself a wild dragon, which apparently aren't as vicious as everyone says, and nursed it back to health from an injury I gave it. Turns out, him and Alvin had a score to settle. Not to mention that Hiccup is a very easy dragon to deal with.', but yet also tried to be humble and meaningful.

"Well, I took a lot of inspiration from you, of course," he said, pointing to Magnus, "But I kinda realized, that training a dragon is a lot like training a goat. You gotta reward the good habits, punish the bad ones, and not scare them to death in the meantime. 'Cause that can happen, you know?" he flashed a smile, fighting the urge to run.

Much of the gathered looked confused, but Tuulikki was just happy that they haven't hit him. "Alright! Now that that's settledâ€¦" Magnus paused for effect, "Back to yer sparring! Go on!"

The teens grumbled, but Cordi looked especially displeased; she grabbed Fishlegs from Tuulikki, who was shocked upon hearing this news, "Fighting? Already?"

"Sorry, Didn't know tha' we needed yer per-mission, Tulle. Yes fighting!" he narrowed his eyes. "Summer's almost over 'n the dragon's are ready to be on their own. Ah mean, they're still young enuff ta take orders." he leaned in closer to Tuulikki, "Now, since ah know that you can take care of dragons after a scrap, it's time ya

go help officiate."

"Offi-see-ate?" for once, Tuulikki's mind failed him.

Magnus sighed, "Just, go and use somma those good Tanner instincts and call off tha fight when it get's too nasty, alright?" he pushed the teen over his newfound fans.

* * *

><p>Exhausted, all Tuulikki wanted to do was curl up in his bed with his dragon right next him, his little heartbeat fluttering awkwardly like his oversized wings. He didn't want to think about what had happened just an hour prior.<p>

He counted several close calls for burns, some of which were very close to parts he was intent on keeping whole. Strangely enough, Astrid was determined not to poison anyone, not that it didn't mean she lost any battles. There was an impromptu haircut, though he wouldn't realize it until Tondra picks it out over the dinner table. All the while, the teens were asking for tips and tricks, giving him space and respect he'd never had before. That wasn't right, his mind protested. It was Hiccup who'd done all the work, not him.

It indeed got too nasty.

On his way back, Tuulikki's mind turned over what Magnus told him, _"Hiccup 'as ta be in the Tournament, o' course he'll be the best, but he has to be here, or else." _He shuddered at the thought. Where was Hiccup?

Thoughts kept coming, little details that nagged at Tuulikki. He needed time to settle this. After swinging by his house for a bite to eat, he found himself beside his fathers grave, pacing back and forth.

He pulled out the book Magnus gave him, an old, thin, leather-bound tome. There was strange runes on the front, but below that were words in a language he could read. 'How to Train Your Dragon, by Professor Yobbish, translated from the original Norse by Magnus the Almighty'

"Oookayâ€|" he flipped the book open.

Underneath the Norse runes, there was one readable sentence. Really two, but it was more of an afterthought. "Yell at it. The louder the better."

"Well. That'sâ€|nice." Maybe the book Cordi gave him would be better at explaining this. He finally took a look at the cover of the book, reading the title aloud. "Common Dragon Breeds and Spotting Guide. Huh. It has to be better than what Magnus got me." He started flipping through the pages, scouring them quickly for anything familiar. Tuulikki settled down against a tree trunk, balancing the book on his knees.

His mind drifted back to that morning, when he was reintroducing himself to the dragons. Their faces were sharper, more angular than before. Fishlegs had yet to lose his roundness, but his scales looked just a tad rougher and darker than before.

He thought again to Hiccup, whose wide eyes and rounded horns hadn't changed since they'd met. In fact, he looked the same ever since he brought him home, albeit a little - just a little bigger. "Haven't I been feeding him? Maybe he's full grownâ€|?" Even that excuse sounded weak to his ears. Hiccup was too much like a child, too youthful to be around for long. The way he trusted Tuulikki to take care of him was proof of that.

He snickered, the train of thought banished when he saw a charcoal drawing of Jam snarling at him. Beyond that page was the 'Undiscovered Breeds' section, blank except for a name and a basic description. He looked through each of them, scoffing a little at the dragons that could change form into humans. Silly fairytales, most of them. Especially the ones with hair. But one caught his eye, if only because of the page.

"The Maximus Dragon," Tuulikki read aloud, "Been reported to be as large as a house or be able to dwarf mountains. This beast can and will eat anything to keep it's massive size. Never attempt to fight or to train. The only thing you can do is - Umm, what does that say?" The charcoal here was all smudged, then torn. "Maybe a warning? It's already sounds bad enough."

A tiny cough broke through his concentration. He put the book down, rattled. It was only Hiccup, sitting by his feet like he never left. Tuulikki broke into a smile, "Don't do that, bud, you scared me." The green dragon pouted, climbing onto his open lap. Tuulikki waited patiently while Hiccup tapped his nose, noticing the unsure look on his scaled face. "What's wrong, Hiccup?"

The dragon jumped down, wings settling as if he was tired of holding them up.

"C'mon, you can tell me."

If it was possible, Hiccup grew sadder, looking into Tuulikki with defeat. "_Cannot tell you. Can only show you._"

* * *

><p>Notes: Yes, there exists a breed of goats that can be scared into fainting which distracts a predator from the more valuable members of the flock. It's kinda cruel, but it works, soâ€|*shrugs*

The joke with 'Officiate' is that Magnus usually has such a hard time with words. But now he didn't.

I just skipped over Tuulikki's interactions with the other teens for this chapter and added the plot-stuff in as flashbacks. I didn't like what I wrote anyways.

Yes that's the same book from the 1st HTTYD book of the same name. Magnus got himself a copy. Somehow. It was one of my first ideas that Tulle would find it and try it out on a much larger Hiccup. I leave you to imagine the details.

Yes, Hiccup is quoting Hiccup.

Please review!

****Ill****

16. The Forest Dragon

****Summary: ****At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking them closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

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****Chapter 16: The Forest Dragon****

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><p>Hiccup darted ahead, leading him deeper into the forest. The afternoon light had reached it's peak, shining down though the trees in beams of bright gold and green. The air felt buzzing with anticipation.<p>

He turned over Hiccup's last words in his mind, "_Can only show you_", as well as the sad look on his face. Tuulikki was left wondering what Hiccup meant. Despite his thoughts, the teen had the nerve to feel bored. He had been wandering around the forest for his lifetime, and this felt no different.

Not to mention they'd walked in a circle for the third time now.

The little dragon was no help at all, continually going forward and back, as if pulling him on an invisible leash. The teen sighedâ€all he could do was follow.

Then Hiccup stopped dead in his tracks.

"..what? What is it now?" They were at a cavern, almost like a miniature mountain range, built up with moss in the middle of the forest. Tuulikki had seen this place from afar, but was always distracted before he could get a closer look. Hiccup was near the entrance. It was doorway-sized, almost a perfect fit; Tuulikki would only have to bend if he needed to get in. Hiccup snarled at him when he tried getting closer. Tuulikki could barely feel a strange wind blowing out of it, like breathing. Hiccup motioned up above, to the rock face. "What do you want me to do?"

"_Go up. Be still._" The rasping was harder on the ears than normal.

"What? Why?"

"_They're coming._" No sooner than he growled it, sounds came from behind them. Tuulikki looked backward, only to see dragons walking slowly toward them. Dragons like Hiccup, dotted with freckles and silvery horns. Dragons that were also not like him. Some were long-necked, or barrel-shaped, or covered head to toe with spines. They looked older, wearier; colored in deep reds and blues and

browns. Many of them were carrying game, most fresh caught, some looked as if it was buried a while.

Tuulikki shivered and backed away from the wave. How many of them were there? Twenty? Thirty? Hiccup was still sitting and gesturing with his claw. "_Go up. Look out for me. Please!_" the last part was bit out hastily.

Tuulikki reluctantly turned away, climbing up the rock face with little difficulty. Hiccup looked up at him with relief. He settled belly-down on the bumpy rock face, watching as the dragons disappeared into the cavern underneath him while Hiccup stayed behind, fidgeting. It was then Tuulikki realizedâ€|the others have food! The teen fished into his pouch and tossed a strip of jerky down, grinning as Hiccup caught it easily. The green dragon dashed inside after his fellows.

He whumphed, settling down on the rocks. "Ah well, this is new. I guess Hiccup isn't alone anymore." Tuulikki looked upon the wood, seeing the trees all around in a new light.

A burst of warm air came out from beneath him. Looking down, he noticed holes in the top of the cavern, small enough to let him look inside. The teen shuffled, trying to find a comfortable spot. He saw the other dragons drop their catch in a pile, Hiccup included. Many of the others scattered away, but the young dragon sat firm against the exit.

'_Hmm.' _Tuulikki thought, _'Is this what he was so worried about? This looks like a potluck, or maybe feeding the younger ones who can't-.' _

A massive jaw came out of nowhere and snapped up half the pile. Tuulikki felt his heart sputter in shock, trying to recall the monster's bone-white face. He nearly fell off the rock face, scrambling to get back up. Peering through the hole again, Tuulikki held his breath.

Hiccup hadn't moved. A rumbling came from beneath him, rattling his bones through sheer force. Hiccup answered back defiantly, dodging the response: a massive claw that drew sparks along the ground as it was dragged.

The young dragon snorted, raising his chin high before turning away, out of the cavern. Another tremor came through the stone and Tuulikki lost his grip, falling on his back. He groaned, face to the sky. Hiccup chirred, sitting on his chest.

He shot up immediately, wrapping his arms around his friend. "Oh, Hiccupâ€|that's what you're up against? Why didn't you tell me?"

The freckled dragon rolled his eyes. Another burst of hot air passed over them, making Tuulikki jump up and scramble a fair difference from the cavern. Several of the other dragons followed them, surrounding the two. The teen was nervous, trying to get out of the circle. "Uhhâ€|_Hey_."

Hiccup jumped down to an empty spot, forcing Tuulikki to squat. He reached to Hiccup, trying to pick him up again, but the dragon just dodged his hands. "Hiccup! C'mon, we gotta go tell someone!"

The dragon shook it's head, running away inside the circle. Tuulikki stumbled after him, hands outstretched. "C'mon, we need to do something! Who knows how long it'll stay trapped in there! We can't do this alone!"

Hiccup cried out, insulted.

He tried another idea, "Okay, okayâ€|this stays between us. Andâ€|these guys." he added at the end, looking worriedly at the other dragons. Tuulikki knelt down, slowly getting closer to Hiccup, one hand reaching out at a last attempt to grab the misbehaving dragon. To his surprise, Hiccup made a happy chirr and leaned his nose into the touch.

Tuulikki shrugged off the eerily familiar sensation, like this had happened before. The wild dragons parted, disappearing off into the forest. "Goodbye, everyone. I'm sorry."

Most of them departed without even a glance back. Except one. He was a deep scarlet, with thick, powerful legs dotted with even darker freckles. His red-brown wings flared out behind him, flexing in a steady rhythm.

Hiccup immediately ran over to him, churring and chirping in Dragonese. He was ignored, and the scarlet dragon strode surely towards Tuulikki. The teen tried not to let his fear show. "_Hello_â€|"

He was pinned in a second. "What," he growled, "have you done?"

Tuulikki, caught up in preserving his life as he was, barely registered that the dragon was using his language. "Iâ€|Iâ€|" he tried, feeling hot under it's silver-grey claws. The wild dragon growled threateningly, narrowing it's forest green eyes. _'They're the same shade as Hiccup'sâ€|'_ _he barely registered the fact before the dragon was tossed aside. Tuulikki shot up, looking left and right.

Waldorf was approaching confidently through the trees. Tuulikki reacted as if on instinct, turning and reaching for the bola as if to tear it off with his bear hands.

He wasn't able to reach it.

Alvin came out of nowhere and tackled him, wicked blue face glaring down at the teen. A sharp pain in his back and a shrill squeak meant that Hiccup was pinned beneath him. "No! What are you doing?"

Waldorf tossed an iron net over the scarlet dragon, chuckling as the creature tried to burn it. "Getting myself a wild dragon of course. I don't need your thanks." He half-motioned for Alvin to get off of Tuulikki, but he stopped himself, "Actually, I don't need you to mess this up." he smirked, "Alvin, stay." He hooked a rope through the net and dragged his prize away. "I'm off to get famous! Bye Tulle!"

Tuulikki glowered, struggling to get Alvin off. He waited until the

hunter had disappeared from sight and growled, "_Get off_."

The brackish dragon would've smirked if he could. "_Make me_." He forcefully sat down on Tuulikki's chest. He could barely breathe. Luckily, one of his arms was free and he started pushing himself off the ground, at least trying to get pressure off of Hiccup.

Something wasn't right. Hiccup's horns were still digging into him. He wasn't moving.

"No. _Nooooo!_" He focused on Alvin with the worst glare he could, growling for good measure. Alvin's grin grew wider, jaws opening and reaching closer to him. Tuulikki tried kicking his feet but couldn't. He wouldn't dare use his free hand to strike-it was holding him up and preventing Hiccup from being squished again. He couldn't keep this up for much longer.

Of course, as it is in stories, the hero arrives in the nick of time. Right now, it seems to be a wild dragon, tackling Alvin off his prey and going at him.

Tuulikki quickly turned and knelt down, getting Hiccup away from the fight while he had the chance.

In fact, there were several wild dragons, all swarming Alvin with gusto. The mob tore and attacked him almost as if it was one entity. Alvin defended himself, turning his tail in a circle and knocking down many of his opponents, carving a safe path and escaping.

Many of the other dragons stayed this time, looking at the injured, smaller dragon in Tuulikki's arms. A mud-brown one, looking much like Alvin, but smaller, humbler, came close and licked Hiccup's nose.

"_It's okay, I got him!_" Tuulikki tried speaking in a friendly manner. The mulch-dotted one bowed its head. The teen 'hmm'ed, shifting Hiccup around to one arm, digging in his pouch and presented the wild dragons with a handful of jerky. "_Here. It's yours._" Many of them shied away, including the brown one. Tuulikki frowned, putting all he had with him in a pile and walking away.

The panic and fear that he had when the scarlet dragon was kidnapped came back suddenly, constricting his chest. Hiccup was laying in his arms, curled up from tip to tail. "_Just like last time._" he sighed, daring not to speak. "_That's why he's still so small._"

A forest green eye inched itself open. Hiccup whirled happily, his little pink tongue darting out against Tuulikki's wrist. "Glad you're up."

He moved his head around, looking for something. "Yeah, sorry about that. That dragon, the red one, he's been captured." Hiccup shrieked, burrowing his head into Tuulikki's arm. "I wish I could've done something, too!"

Hiccup burrows his head in deeper. Tuulikki gives up reasoning, seeing as he reached the town and it would seem silly to argue in front of so many people. Definitely not because any excuse he made in his head was stupid.

Magnus's voice boomed loud and ominous in the late afternoon sky. "-special guest will be the final test of our new dragon trainers!" He was far off in the center of town, Waldorf by his side, both grinning. "Th' tournament shall be in two days. Tell yer neighbors!" He finished, dangling the iron net out on his staff while many of the adults cheered.

A nasty pit of darkness ate up his stomach.

"We'll figure something out."

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****Notes:** **The title is just half a joke because I'm not sure whether the forest dragon is the Cavern Dragon/White Death or the scarlet dragon. (hah! Red, green, and white! Christmas colors!)

I wanted to show a sassy side of Hiccup. He's not afraid of The White Death because he knows how far her claws reach. And he knows that bringing more people in wouldn't help. It has to be him to destroy her, because he's her nemesis.

That brown, mulch-colored dragon isâ€|you guessed it! Mulch! He's one of the few dragons from Hiccup's tribe that I haven't introduced. I think some of those that are left are Phlegma the Fierce, Mildew, and Sven. That's all the named adults I can think of off the top of my head. (and Bucket, but he's â€|_delicate_ situation.) Spitelout and all the other Viking teen's parents aren't there because they're domesticated.

â€|and yes, anything that Hiccup didn't eat he stashed away and gave to the forest dragons so that they could survive. He doesn't need too much food, anyway.

Please review!

****Ill****

17. For Now

****Summary:** **At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking them closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

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****Notes:** **I like how no one questioned the scarlet dragon. I should've made it more ambiguous. If could've been Valhallarama for all we know, and let's face it, Tuulikki can't tell gender at a glance. Especially for dragons. He just projected his gender on it,

like he did Hiccup, like you would with any dog or cat you can't figure out.

Also, welcome to the last third of the story!

* * *

><p>Chapter 17: For Now

"_We'll figure something out."_

"'EY! TULLE! Yer needed ta help! C'mon!"

"What?" Magnus and Waldorf were walking towards him. "Uhhâ€|" he started looked left and right, "You know I really gotta go home! It's almost dinnertime and my Mom's gonna be worriedâ€|"

"Ah ah ah! Noooooâ€|didn'tcha want a lesson in dealing with a wild dragon?" The older man poked at the net, "Now's yer chance." Waldorf was looking angrier and angrier the closer he got.

"I-" he stopped arguing and thought about his opportunity, namely, getting close to the scarlet dragon. "Ugh! Fine!" Hiccup was stuffed under his shirt, and Tuulikki was more than a little relieved that he didn't fuss and latched on as well as he could. The teen refastened his belt under Hiccup's cloaked form as a safety precaution, asking him to stay still and rest.

Passenger secure, Tuulikki stomped off to join his master and rival. "Hey, uhh, want me to carry him?" Waldorf practically bristled at that comment, daring him with his eyes to make a move toward the net.

"Ahh. No. You go on ahead into my house and grab a bucket of water and some rags."

"But-"

"No!" the two men shouted. They looked at each other, a little shocked. "Let'sâ€|uhâ€|" Waldorf started, looking awkward.

"Never do that again." Mangus completed his thoughts.

Tuulikki sighed, running as steadily as he could to Magnus's house. The teen raced inside, looking around hurriedly for the cleaning supplies, ignoring the golden dragon that was snapping at his heels. "Not now, Gobber! We're on a mission!" The old dragon snuffed at his shirt, making Tuulikki pull up. Hiccup poked his head out, narrowing his eyes at Gobber, who leaned his snub nose even closer. "Hey! No fighting, you two!" Tuulikki glared down at his passenger, feeling just a little silly. "I gotta find the bucket and spare rags quickly or they'll leave us behind!"

The old dragon snorted, padding his way through the house while Tuulikki kept searching. Soon enough, Gobber nudged the teen's leg, bucket of rags in mouth. Tuulikki scratched at his head in thanks. "Wanna come with us? We're off to the arena with Magnus and Wally!" He held the door open.

Gobber came around Magnus, growling in his happy way to him. "Hey, ya

big lug. Who let you out?"

"Heh. Sorry about that. He wanted to come along. Where's the well?"

The dragon master grunted, leaning down and scratching Gobber's flaking scales. "Behind the house."

The bucket was soon filled to the brim, sloshing against Tuulikki's knees as it was carried. True, it was a difficult journey, but by the end, most of the water was intact and Waldorf's shoes were mostly dry, that's what counted!

The shed was mostly the same inside as it was outside: dull, wind-worn wood held together by luck and steel nails. Tuulikki knelt down on the floor, wringing a rag out and starting to work at the dirt-encrusted floor. The scarlet dragon was put beside him, still trapped in his iron net. Waldorf looked down on both of them, daring with his eyes for them not to escape.

Tuulikki had an idea. "Hey." He sets down the rag and carefully prods at the scarlet dragon, "I wonder what Magnus is paying you for this guy. He's probably worth a lot, I mean, wow, the first wild dragon ever to be caught. Have you talked with him about the price yet?"

He looked up, only to see the realization and growing panic on Waldorf's face. "I'll be just a bit." and he ran out the door.

Tuulikki breathed a sigh of relief, reaching in his shirt and grabbing Hiccup. As soon as he saw the net, he made a mournful sound. The scarlet dragon was still, almost noble-looking while trapped in the iron. The green dragon immediately curled up as much as he could next to his kin, as if trying to reassure him on touch alone. Tuulikki whispers, "Don't worry, they talk a big game. As long as we're quiet, they'll be too focused on arguing."

The scarlet dragon just stared, and Hiccup tried to curl up even tighter. "Tooth-hiss_" he said, trying for a reaction.

The creature nodded, looked between Hiccup and Tuulikki, as if weighing something. Then, he spoke. "I am Shani the Vast." His voice was deep and intimidating, completely fitting the regal posture he took on. There was a slight lisp, the growling echo of a strange accent. Tuulikki tried to keep a straight face, concentrating on his work. "So," the scarlet dragon continued, "Are you ready to fight with Haakon?"

The bucket nearly tipped over with the force of Tuulikki's turn. "What? I don't understand."

Shani's posture fell, his eyes softened, and he looked at Hiccup in what could've been panic. "You didn't tell him?"

"I tried! _He wasn't listening!_" Hiccup said back, the freckled dragon shrugging. "_How was I supposed to know that he wasn't paying attention?_"

The scarlet dragon sighed, "No matter. He's seen Maxima, yes?"

Maxima could only meanâ€¦ Tuulikki thought back to the cavern, the huge, gaping jaws and knifelike talons. He nodded, a weight settling in his stomach.

"Then he knows what must be done." Shani folded his wings, laying down, entrapped in the net. "My part in this is done. Whatever happens, I know that this will end." He looked solidly at Hiccup, "Maybe not tonight, and maybe not tomorrow, but it will end."

He didn't speak after that, and all Hiccup could do was be near. Tuulikki finished cleaning, slotting the metal cage together in silence. The scarlet dragon stepped inside, stoic as ever.

Shani curled up in the farthest corner of the pen, waiting. "We'll get you out, and we'll find a way." Tuulikki tried reassuring, himself or the others, he didn't know.

When the scarlet dragon didn't make a sound, Tuulikki stood up and left, holding onto Hiccup tighter than ever.

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><p>The little dragon was doubly insistent about training when they got home, stretching and jumping and winding himself through the maze of sticks until he could do it blindfolded. Meanwhile, all Tuulikki could think about was Shani's imprisonment.<p>

He was sure he could just run out and steal him, but what would that do? Shani was already Waldorf's property, he would just be punished and Shani would be back where he was in no time. There was no way he'd be able to hide his tracks for long. Not to mention, that did nothing about Maxima. Would anyone believe him, about a dragon in a cave that ate and ate until it couldn't get out?

'_Probably not.' _his mind snarks as he threw rocks up in the air for Hiccup to shoot. And then there was Hiccup. He was sure that if he and Shani were ever in the same space as each other, people would notice. That was another reason to avoid the tournament. The dragon cheered when he blasted them out of the sky. And if Hiccup actually fought against hisâ€¦ father, brother, clans-mate? Hold on. "Hiccupâ€¦err Haakon?" he asked.

The freckled dragon stopped burrowing for a moment, "Hiccup ish fine."

"What's Shani to you? How do you know each other?"

"Iss Dad." and he continued burrowing, oblivious to the impact it had on Tuulikki.

"What - howâ€¦?" his mind fumbles, trying to imagine what he could've done. A wave of visions overtook him, Shani fighting in the tourney, Hiccup watching as his father died, or worse, killing him himself and never being able to live it down. The thoughts were too much to bear. "Why didn't you tell me!"

Hiccup waddled over, indignant. "I did! _You don't listen_!" he huffs and a little spark of fire comes out. "_Help or not, _Tooth-_hiss?_" and he turns, going into the barn.

Tuulikki followed him angrily, shouting, "I'm trying-I don't know what to do!" there was his voice going squeaky againâ€|

The dragon paused, tugging a rake down from the wall. The teen grabbed a hold of it, prompting Hiccup to lash out with his tail. "_Then help!_" The tool came out with a crash, smacking the dragon in between his horns. He growled even more, snapping at the air in a frenzy. Tuulikki grabbed at the rake, swinging it in a defensive arc. "Fight me." Hiccup said, daring with his eyes. His voice was less childlike, more daring.

"No." He set the rake upright, puffing out his chest in authority.

Hiccup just snorted and jumped, tackling him head on. Snapping at the teens wrist, he forced Tuulikki to twirl the rake around, getting hit in the process. The dragon kept fighting, goading the teen out of the shed.

They settled into a uneven pattern of claws and teeth against wood and iron. Hiccup started talking, maybe to himself, maybe he was trying to convince Tuulikki, neither of them were sure. "My name is Haakon. I am the last of the clan Byot'ler. I have been told too many times that I must fight." He punctuated this with a harsh thwap of his tail against the rake. His voice suddenly changed into high, thin cries, "I never wanted this! I-I just wanted-!" despite the movement of his body, he couldn't spit out the words he needed. The furious, frantic movements he had slowed and he suddenly stared down a panting Tuulikki. His voice settled back into a deeper growl, "But if am to fight, I will not lose. I will become stronger, even if I am alone while doing it!" Hiccup lunged, burying himself in the folds of Tuulikki's shirt, toppling him over.

He wrapped his arms around the shaking form almost instinctively, ignoring the painful welts he was getting. "Hiccup." he said, starting up on his knees. He knew, he knew what that was like. So he said, "Sorry I've been distant, I just, don't wanna see you fight. I know it wasn't your first choice, either. But you're wrong, you're not alone. Not as long as I'm around."

Tuulikki looked down, relaxing his grip as Hiccup stopped thrashing. The teen almost swore he heard a muffled, "_thank you_", but that was impossible, giving how his face was smooshed up against his chest. There was a little wet spot growing on his shirt, but Tuulikki ignored it, choosing to rock back and forth, vaguely remembering what his mother would do for him when he was little and needed a good cry. This continued for a little while, until he noticed how still Hiccup had become. There also weren't any sobs coming from himâ€|strange.

He looked again, lifting Hiccup up from his chest for good measure. "Why you little-!" the dragon was snickering now, chewing and slobbering his shirt in glee. "Okay, now you're gonna get it!" The green dragon jumped off of the teen's legs, eagerly waiting for his friend. Tuulikki smiled and stomped his feet, making Hiccup run around the farm. With childish glee, he chased after him until the sun went down.

For an afternoon, at least, they forgot how alone they once were, how

much they still had to do, what choices lay ahead for the both of them.

Ah, but that was enough, for now.

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****Notes: ****

Okay so the Scarlet Dragon _was_ Stoick. Shani's name is Hebrew for Scarlet, and it is unisex. His title is not just a reference to his massive wingspan, but the fact that he's traveled farther than any other dragon of Hiccup's tribe, learning about humans. He's tried to get humans involved with Maxima before, but failed.

Hiccup's true name is Haakon, which is a term for a snowboarding flip which involves going backward, jumping and doing a somersault and two rotations. I first wanted the name Hǣkon, which is Old Norse for "high son". But then my spellcheck flipped out and got me Haakon, which also fits because in the Winter Olympic shorts for HTTYD, Hiccup was an amazing snowboarder.

Byot'ler is just a corrupted version of Butler, a reference to Gerard Butler, Stoick's voice actor.

A bit of me thinks this story is actually ending up more about Hiccup than Tuulikki. Maybe it's because I actually think that Hiccup is the more proactive of the two. Toothless had a long time to think, and be ready, but Hiccup will go out and do what's right, even if it gets him killed. He's tired of being left alone, while all Toothless wants to _be _is alone.

Also, I saw the leaked clips of HTTYD2. Hiccup is fine. Like _fiiiiinnne _fine. Astrid is amazing as well. Please review!

****Ill****

18. Return of the Dragon Whisperer

****Summary: ****At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking them closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

****Notes:****

So today was AIMS and I went to school too early. Have a chapter that I was going to post on March 1st.

I'd like to apologize for Siegfried(Hookfang). His character and choices were decided before I actually found out how much of an

adorable ditz he is in Riders/Defenders of Berk. As such, I imagined him much like Snotlout in character. Happy reading!

* * *

><p>Chapter 18: Return of the Whisperer

After the revelations, after they had seen Shani in his pen, after they'd ran after each other, stopped and caught their breath, Hiccup and Tuulikki went to work. That night and the day after was full of their own training. They had collapsed into their beds when their arms couldn't work, but their mouths kept on, telling each other stories in mixed Dragon and human tongues well into the night. They both were content.

That didn't matter, because right now, Tuulikki was grumpy.

It was nearly dawn, and Hiccup wouldn't stop batting at his chest. Tuulikki shuffled closer into his bed, growling. The dragon answered back by sitting on his head, forcing the teen to sit up. "_Don' wannaâ€¦!" he hissed, wrapping his arms around Hiccup and holding him close to his chest.

"_Have'ta!_" the green dragon replied, squirming. "Git'up! Training!" he said at last, forcing the teen to waken by sticking his tongue in an ear.

"Gah!" Tuulikki shuddered, silencing the dragon's cries of 'Training! Training!' with a, "Fine! 'M up!" Grabbing his staff from near the window, the teen stood up, smacking his lips and yawning. Hiccup jumped off of him, tumbling down to sit at the windowsill, gazing outside like he means to snatch it in his claws and run off with it. Tuulikki groaned, stretching out, finally remembering what he needed to do. "Ughhh," he groaned again, "Training."

Magnus had insisted that a final dragon trainer meeting would take place the day before the tournament. Tuulikki thought that it was a waste of time well spent on rest, but he wasn't the Dragon Master. He put on his day clothes and Hiccup climbed his way on his shoulder, smiling at him. Maybe he was the Dragon Master, eventually.

Hiccup's weight was nothing, and it seemed as if the Arena was closer than usual. They approached from where they were clearly seen by the others, not that they were waiting for them to arrive. At least, Storm and Siegfried weren't, focusing on the battle between Astrid and Snotlout.

Astrid was a dynamo; She was all spinning blue-and-gold spikes, wreathed in fire. It was almost like a perfect storm, and with that thought he looked to her master. The blonde teen was all covered in matching bits of leather armor, tailored with a steady hand to fit her shape. There were soot stains on the dress, as well as spike marks on her boots and armor, but it didn't detract from her beauty. In fact, Storm looked more human than ever, having some flaws made the teen seem more real to him than just a walking dream.

In the second he looked away, Astrid had won the fight. Snotlout had let out a deep whine and ran back behind Siegfried. The redhead stomped his foot, startling his dragon to move beside him. Hiccup had jumped off his shoulder, making his way straight to Astrid.

"Hey, Tulle." Storm was talking, actually talking to him! "Oh is that him?" her bright eyes went straight to Hiccup. "He looks a bit small."

"Hehe. Well, he's definitely a fighter." Tuulikki focused back on his dragon. "Hey Hiccup!" he tried getting his attention. The green dragon turned his head. The only word to describe his expression was lovestruck. Tuulikki winced. This wasn't going to end well, was it?

Hiccup must have noticed, because he shook his head and snapped to attention. He started growling and hissing before taking his friend down in a swift tackle.

"Hiccup!" He yelped.

The dragon chirred, soft enough for only Tuulikki to hear. He quickly dived for the jerky pouch, snatching a bite and jumping away. Hiccup dropped it right in front of Astrid, hissing happily.

Tuulikki stood up, irritated, but curious. Was it a kind of courtship?

Storm cooed. "Aww, look at him, he's trying to make a friend. Astrid!" The blue dragon looked up. "Flirt!" Astrid picked up the jerky in her mouth tenderly, as if it could crumble at any moment. Then she smacked Hiccup with it in full force, making him hit the ground. She put the jerky back down, and curiously enough, knocked her chin against his horns before jumping back into Storm's arms. "Ohh such a good Astrid!"

Hiccup perked right back up, spinning around in a circle. He jumped up into his friend's hands, stretched his neck out and pecked near her mouth. She batted him with her wing.

"Oh, sorry about Hic-"

"What's wrong with his leg?" Storm spoke up.

"Hmm?" Tuulikki figured it might turn out this way. He feigned confusion, deciding to have a little fun. He turned Hiccup over, making a show of checking his only back leg, stretching it out, checking the scar patterning, wiggling his little talons one at a time before coming to the obvious conclusion: "Nothing's wrong."

"Of course something's wrong. It's missing!" Her voice jumped up an octave, as if Tuulikki was blind enough to miss his dragon's defect.

At that, Hiccup shrank back, closer to Tuulikki's chest. Humming a little, the teen ignored Storm and scratched at the dragon's neck, reassuring him. "Hey! Stop that!" he chided, half to Hiccup and half to Storm. "He's perfectly fine with what he's got! Tuulikki turned his face and saw the rest of the trainers gathering, "He faced Alvin on three legs, why shouldn't he fight your dragons?"

Siegfried walked over, unaffected, "Pfft! I'll take him on!"

Tuulikki looked between his 'friend' and his pet. "Umm, you sure he's okay?" Snotlout was trailing behind him, head low.

"Yeah of course he's okay, he's my dragon, he'll do whatever I tell him." Hiccup seemed to have recovered, dropping down from his cradle and tapping his claw against Snotlout's horns, who hissed in response. "Fireball, Snot! Catch him off guard!" The brown dragon snorted and fired at Hiccup, who barely dodged.

"What! You're cheating!" Hiccup was struggling with the larger opponent, trying to bite at it's weak points, but it was tough going. Tuulikki forced himself to watch, clenching his fists. He should've expected this.

"Well that's because you don't belong here, Toe." Snotlout and Hiccup were rolling in a ball on the ground, tussling. "You think that you can just waltz in here talking up your dragon, well you've got another thing coming! Snottie, fireball!"

He couldn't have chosen a better time. Snotlout's front paws were pressing down on the juncture between Hiccup's body and his wings, effectively pinning him on the ground. His mouth was poised open, with a threatening cloud of smoke coming from it, but nothing came. Snotlout hacked, giving Hiccup a chance to take his claws and dig them into the other dragon's sides, causing him to fall over.

Hiccup waited by Snotlout's side for a few seconds, then patted his belly and walked away.

"Oh, no fair!" Siegfried shouted, "He was still tired from fighting Astrid!"

"Well then maybe you should take care of him! Ever think of that?" He felt himself get angrier. "All I wanted was to get some respect from you guys, but now I can't have it? Because Hiccup's small? Because he's got no leg? Because your dragon lost a stupid little practice fight? He stooped, grabbing Hiccup by the neck, ignoring his whines. "C'mon."

Magnus was in his way, but Tuulikki only glared even harder and walked around him, slamming the shed door shut.

The old man looked just as stunned as the teenagers. "Now, wha' di' ja' do this time?"

Tuulikki leaned against the door, breathing heavily. Hiccup was at his side, whining plaintively. "_No._ I'm done."

The dragon huffed, crawling his way around the floor to the pen. Shani was curled in a ball of red scales and wings. He lifted his head, acknowledging the two others in the room. Hiccup immediately pushed himself against the bars of the pen, stretching his front-most paw to his father's nose. Intrigued, he pressed his head forward, respecting Hiccup's intrusion. The green dragon started babbling in Dragonese, rattling his tongue in his mouth like it was going to fall out any minute.

Shani waited, listening, and looked to Tuulikki; folded up against the door, forehead settling on his knees. "Is it strange for a human to refuse his childhood playmates?"

"Not for me, and not for them."

Hiccup had looked at him with such pity. Tuulikki flinched. The green dragon abandoned his post, waddling himself over to his friend's side. Tuulikki casually put his palm on his back, scratching at the green scales while Hiccup chirred. "I just want-" He stuttered, "Why can't the others see you the way I do? I need to show them that you're not monsters-Snotlout included." he moved away from the door, casting his eyes on Shani as he'll have an answer.

Hiccup growled, pursing his lips in what Tuulikki knew was a frown. Suddenly, he dived, getting his nose in the door and wrenched it open, wasting no time. Hiccup was out of the shed, whooping and calling to the others.

Shani raised a claw to his chin in mock-thought. "Hmm. Are you thinking of doing something stupid?" he said in his growling accent.

Tuulikki stood up, "Nah. Maybe something crazy."

Siegfried snorted in frustration. That stupid green dragon-Hiccup? Cruddy name. Anyway, he was creeping around Snottie, irritating the snot out of both of them. "Toe Licker! Get you idiot dragon away from mine!" he shouted, a tad loud, but he was mad and he was too afraid to pick Hiccup up. The rest of the trainers wouldn't dare to come near, settling on fighting the others.

Tuulikki strode out the shed, looking more confident than he felt. He gathered Hiccup in his arms like a child would a plush toy. Tilting his head, he tried to be curious instead of angry. "C'mon Seig-what's got you so mad?"

"Snottie won't fire!" the redhead watched in mild fascination as Hiccup moved to Tuulikki's shoulder just as his partner knelt down to look at Snotlout. The dark-skinned teen scratched under the dragon's chin, noting the wheezing that could almost pass as a warning growl.

"How long can he usually breathe fire?"

"Forever! I'm telling you, Snotlout is just being disobedient."

"How many fireballs?" Tuulikki nearly commanded, voice darkening.

The elder boy tried not to show his discomfort. "â€|ehh, probably about five, give or take. What's it matter?"

"How many fireballs did he do today?"

Siegfried knotted his eyebrows, taking his fingers and counting off. "He fought Froglegs, then like two with Astrid, kept dodging, andâ€|ugh that fire he started for breakfast! Snotlout!" The burnt-looking dragon waddled his way over. "Warn me, alright!" He patted Snotlout's head, and in turn the dragon chirred. "Good Snottie. Then let's work on tackling. Get Hiccup!"

Hiccup yelped, digging into Tuulikki's shoulder as Snotlout stretched

out and leaned against the teen's hips, snarling playfully. Tuulikki played along, running away and dodging the dragon's attempts to reach Hiccup. They ran straight into the fight nearby, between Stormfly and Fishlegs. The teen tripped, almost clipping the boulder-like dragon in the head and dividing the two.

Snotlout skidded to a stop behind him, taking a good look at Astrid and going back to Seigfried. _'Serves him right.' _Tuulikki thought. He assessed the damage-Hiccup was mostly unscathed, but his own chest was hurting from the drop. His leg was tingling for some reason as wellâ€|

He propped his chest up, looking behind him. "Fishlegs?" the light-brown dragon was chewing on his calf with some sort of foreign determination. At his name, the lizard stopped, looking stunned.

"You're the best, Astrid!" Storm cheered, distracting them both. Her dragon was bobbing its head in time to her shouts joyfully. That was in sharp contrast to Fishlegs, who's only response was to stumble tiredly back to Cordi.

Hiccup had crawled off of him, making his move to Astrid. Tuulikki saw this, thought about a stronger, faster ball of gold spikes and said, "Hmâ€|yeah, let's not. C'mon, lover-boy." and he dragged Hiccup by his front horn, away from the partying girls. He goes to the losers, the fallen, with a friendly smile. "Hey Cords. How's Fishlegs?" The teen says, glad for the familiar face. He reached a hand to Fishlegs.

Cordi immediately tries to shove Tuulikki away. "Sorry about that, he's just getting so grumpy latelyâ€|" Fishlegs tries to bite at her, looking more irritated as time went on. "Oh, Tuulikki, do the thing you did last time!"

The change in temper was worrying Tuulikki as well. "On it." He started crooning, surprised to find that Hiccup was doing the same. Fishleg's yellow eyes relaxed, and his snout lowered in what seemed like sheepishness. Hiccup found it safe to approach, and the two dragons greeted each other.

Cordi watched, awed. "Can you teach me that?"

"Sure! Ummâ€|" His fingers rubbed on his sleeves while he thought. "Okay, so you start in the back of the throat, and you just sorta-" and his voice falls flat, "growl. But softly, and rattle your-uh, throat-hole flap."

"Throat-hole flap?"

"Throat-hole flap." He said, deadpan.

"Okayâ€|" She rumbled, quick and harsh. Hiccup and Fishlegs winced, and she looked at Tuulikki, desperate. H noticed the little things about her, her tired eyes, ruffled hair, cuts appearing on her arms; as if a light had shone directly on them. She's at the end of her knowledge.

Now was the time to do something different. "You need to do it slower, almost like a sigh. Fishlegs -any dragon- will react to your

tone. He knows that you're scared, and that makes him scared. So you have to be calm. Don't worry." he adds, patting her on the back, "You've got good intentions, you're still just learning to express them."

"â€|Thanks." and that little smile was worth it, in Tuulikki's eyes.

Meanwhile, Hiccup was getting himself acquainted -first, he patted the round dragon's snout, and after that he settled nearby, waiting for a reaction.

"_Who're you?" _Fishlegs was the first to start.

"Hiccup_!"_ he chirruped out in the brightest voice he could. Fishlegs was just a bit bigger than him, but he grew up feeling small, so there was no discomfort.

The little round dragon looked around, _"Fight?"_

Hiccup's brows knitted together, _"No. Friend."_

"_When fight?"_

"_Not now."_

It was now Fishlegs's turn to be confused. _"Ummâ€|now?"_ he tilted his head.

"_No! Friend is dragon no fight until have to!" _Hiccup resorted to smaller words, getting frustrated. Fishlegs was bigger than him, but dumber. That was a shame, he really had hopedâ€|

"_Oh." _Fishlegs settled back on his haunches, looking up and finding a very interesting leaf swaying on the wind. He saw Tuulikki and Cordi coming over, grinning and satisfied with their progress. _"Out Masters are here now! Fight time!" _Ignoring the freckled dragon's protests, Fishlegs attacked, going for his remaining leg.

Hiccup batted his claws at Fishleg's head, trying to get him to let go, only succeeding when he blew smoke into the bigger dragon's face. The brown dragon snorted, rolling away and diving in again, blunt teeth catching the top of Hiccup's wing. His jaws were locked and his eyes stuck straight, not seeing the humans try to separate them. Tuulikki barks out a _"Stop!"_ before he can think, and the two dragons waited, caught doing something they shouldn't.

Actually, all of the dragons in the Arena stopped, but Tuulikki didn't notice, instead stooping and plucking Hiccup off of the ground. Relieved, the green dragon crawled his way up his friends shoulder, taking his place beside Tuulikki's right ear.

Fishlegs was a snarling, writing mess, and he understands where the cuts come from. But now he's calm, looking at Cordi patiently, almost waiting.

"_He doesn't know when to fight."_ Hiccup's voice resonates in his ear. Tuulikki repeats it out loud, and things slot into place.

"We need to figure out a way to tell him when it's time to fight.

Like a word, or maybe a hand signal" He looked to Hiccup, lowering his voice. "We need a word. Something that no one uses."

The little dragon curled himself tighter in thought.

"Both. It has to be both. I don't want anyone trying to control Fishlegs." She was resolute, giving her answer with a stern glare before checking back on her dragon, reaching under and scratching at his belly.

"Berserk." Hiccup snorted out. It was less a word and more of a collection of gravely vowels.

"Bless you." Tuulikki said, "But we really need to get working on a word." A tail smacked his head.

"Berserk!" And it suddenly occurred to Tuulikki that this was the word he was waiting for. He repeated it, and Cordi followed, shooing the older boy away after she mastered the Dragonese word.

"You're welcome!" he called out, glad to see her and Fishlegs getting along. They were far away, enough for Cordi to not even hear. Maybe Tuulikki liked it that way.

Unfortunately, he was far away from Cordi, not from any other people in the Arena. Hiccup was on the ground, having deemed it a Snotlout-free area and he started to roam, glad to see at least a glimpse of the trees. Hiccup was nosing around the shed, looking for any weak points when something slammed into him. It was Tuffnut, or maybe Ruffnut, the golden dragon having gotten out from under the watch of the cousins. The dragon bounced away like spring had come early, but Hiccup was shaken, all scrunched up against the wall. He whined and Tuulikki was right there, picking the ropelike dragon up by its nape and growling at it.

The sinister little creature had the decency to look ashamed as Berta came running. "Ahh! Sorry, Toe." She hesitantly reached for her dragon, grabbing it carefully. "Ruff, what is going on?" the golden lizard wrapped itself around her arm easily and the girl scratched under its head.

Hiccup hissed up at Berta, getting close and stamping his three feet in irritation. She jumped back, scooting herself away. "He's trained, right? Fully trained?"

"Yeah. Come here, Hiccup." The freckled dragon snorted, but took the pro-offered arm and hoisted himself up on Tuulikki's shoulder.

"Wow." Her green-golden eyes grew big, following the dragon's path.

"What?" Why was Berta staring so much? Was Hiccup doing something? Tuulikki turned his head, eyeing his dragon carefully. No, nothing wrong. He smiled a little, taking a hand and scratching in-between Hiccup's horns. Hiccup purred.

Berta watched this with awe. "You're crazy." She continued her wide-stare, taking in the older teen.

He didn't understand what she meant, so he shrugged.
"â€¦Thanks?"

Ruffnut hissed, getting her master's attention. "Oh, hey, sorry." She copied Tuulikki, scratching in-between her dragon's horns. "Wait, you should be sorry!" she glowered at Ruffnut, who's expression changed from 'pleased' to 'disinterested' faster than an eye could blink. "You need to start behaving! It's Tuff's fight, not yours!"

"_It's ours!_" she growled out, "_My pack, my fight._" Berta only narrowed her eyes at her, sneer pulling at the corner of her face.

"Hey." The girl looked up, shocked. Tuulikki winced, not used to the attention. "Well, maybe she wants to fight with uh, Tuff. He's her brother, right?" he said, haltingly. Berta continued her silent stare, "I think you can get Magnus to let the two of them fight together, I mean, it's not like they're the biggest dragons." Ruffnut perked up, at least.

"Mmm. Yeah." Berta mumbled, moving herself away.

Tuulikki, out of anything else to do, stood and watched while the others played around with their dragons. "We're doing good, right?" He looked at Hiccup.

The dragon snorted, then rubbed at Tuulikki's cheek.

"â€¦right."

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**Notes: **

Of course the rest of the group would have issues with Hiccup's amputation: You just don't expect the dragon who beat Alvin the Conqueror to be missing a leg. No one thinks about something drastic like a limb gone. Idealization is in full swing with this, you know, like how The Outcasts thought 'The Dragon Conqueror' was "ten feet tall with the strength of a dozen men".

I guess it's a little like seeing battle-scarred veterans; they find you fighting for them lovely and nice and heroic, but the recovering ones, the amputees, the ones with mental scars, they don't want to see. As a society, we tend to shun people that don't 'fit'. It doesn't matter where or how you got your scars, you will still be judged by just _having_ them.

Which is why I find the movies really nice, because it shows Hiccup and Toothless (also Gobber) as functioning people that are accepted despite their injuries. Having them just be there with no comment is awesome.

And apparently Siegfried took over as narrator for a little bit.

Huh.

Also, mentally, the teen's dragons are about 7. By next spring, the domestic dragons will be at teens-level thinking, and by the time they're 5 years old, they're adults. However, though dragons naturally live to around 30 or 40 years, not many live to see it because of the tournaments. Gobber is about 30ish.

Wild dragons live to around 70 or 80, though they grow slower. Hiccup is about 16 mentally, but he's actually 8 years old. By the time he's 10, he'll have an adult mind and a fully developed body.

Fishlegs is what's known in the HTTYD books as a 'berserker', someone who fights in an insane rage that cannot be stopped. There is also incidents in the TV series where Fishlegs does let his anger out, notably in 'Gem of a Different Color', where he scares the living snot out of everyone. I thought it'd be a nice reference.

Berta got distracted by the easy way Tuulikki handles his dragon. Confidence is pretty attractive.

And if you haven't guessed, there's no romance in this story. No Toothcup, no Toothfly, no Toothlug, no Barfless or anything. Toothless doesn't strike me as the type to be thinking about relationship stuff, and Tuulikki has bigger problems right now. As a character, he's pretty anti-social, Tuulikki needs to reacquaint himself with others before any love develops. They're only 15-17, they've got lots of time.

Sorry about the update! I was distracted by an upcoming chapter. Show of hands, how many people would like to hear Hiccup's side of the story?

Love, Ill

19. The Last Night

****Summary: ****At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking them closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

****Notes: ****Here we go, the part I've been dreading writing! Tournament incoming! So much fightingâ€¦ :P I was so squeamish, next time I write something I'd better make sure that the fighting isn't practically dog fighting. Stupid Pokemon, desensitizing me! And stupid me, for thinking I'd be okay with itâ€¦ There's also a lot of stuff that goes down this chapter.

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<p>Chapter 19: The Last Night

The morning of the Tournament was easy, easier than he'd had in a long time. Tondra had let him rest, for as long as she could, then bounced her boys out of bed with a smile and a full breakfast.

"Go on, go on! I've got no doubt you'll make me proud!" she said,

giving Tuulikki a shove out of the house. "I'm gonna make everything ready when you come home, don't you worry."

"Wait I forgot my-" he started to say, but he was out of the door, empty-handed. "I'm probably not going to need it, right?" Hiccup nodded, already stomping down the trail.

The town was bustling with travelers, eager to find the Arena. Tuulikki had Hiccup climb up into his arms as to not be trampled. Not many people wanted to approach the two, though Hiccup was stretching his neck, daring to get a look at everyone.

The main path was crowded by people. Tuulikki took one look at it and huffed, irritated. He went straight to the tree line, bypassing the travelers. Hiccup quieted, familiar scenery calming the both of them. Soon Tuulikki came out of the forest, directly beside the shed. "Wait, maybe-" he darted back behind a shadow, checking to see if anyone had seen them. "Good." he whispered, "Let's go see your dad." They crept around in the trees, to the back door of the shed, gently easing it open.

Waldorf and Magnus were there, kneeling over the cage. Waldorf flickered his eyes over, glaring. Hiccup immediately dived into the safety of Tuulikki's shirt, crawling around to the back. Tuulikki quickly clasped his hands behind him for support.

"Uhh, Hey good morning! Is this where we're supposed to meet?" he said, smiling as much as he could. Magnus was kneeling beside the cage, concentrating. He held a metal stick which had a flat piece on the end, shifting it under Shani and flipping him over like a hotcake. Once the scarlet dragon got comfortable, Magnus flipped him over again, ignoring the grumbles. Tuulikki only managed to get a quick look before Waldorf blocked his view.

"No previews, Tulle. Out." The spiked teen moved forward, backing Tuulikki out of the door. Grumbling, both teens walked together, toward the gathering of people. Tuulikki looked underfoot, turning his head around before fixing Waldorf with a stare.

The older teen's shoulders were just a tad more down than usual. "If you're wondering where Alvin is, he's-recovering." Pale blue eyes flickered, from the space where Alvin was supposed to be, back to Tuulikki. "I know we're not the best of friends, but-don't do anything stupid. I have a pretty good idea where Hiccup came from." Waldorf's glare returned full-force. "Don't get too proud of yourself. Not every creature is so willing to listen." Tuulikki was about to say something back, when the other dragon trainers called him over to join them. He gave Waldorf another glare before walking off to join them, turning his words around in his mind. He couldn't trust him-right?

"Hey Toelicker! Where's your dragon? Hope he didn't chicken out!" Siegfried clapped his hand on Tuulikki's shoulder, shaking him a bit. Hiccup popped out of the shirt, hissing. "Woah, okay there-" The green dragon smirked, curling into Tuulikki's shoulder.

"Yeah, he's ready alright." Thoughts momentarily forgotten, Tuulikki allowed himself a smile. He'd spent a lot of time working with Hiccup on fighting, now it can be paid off. He looked at the other contestants, all nervous and excited as he was. Cordi and Storm were

following after their mothers and the gathering of traveling wives, engaged in gossip. Bartek and Berta were getting last-minute checkups from their shared aunts and uncles, the family all there to cheer them on. Even Siegfried's father had come out, the thickset, flame-headed man a near-double of his son.

Magnus finally came out from the shed, sullen, calling to the trainers, bidding them to hold their dragons and stand in a line. He addressed the crowd. "Welcome everyone to the Rookie Tournament! This is the final test! The demonstration of skills needed to keep dragons: Diligence, intelligence, determination, and responsibility! The trainers must keep their dragons under control-both on the battlefield and off. And: the one who does best will have the honor of facing this Devil:" He gestured with his staff, and Waldorf brought the scarlet dragon out, collared and snarling. The crowd shifted away, "Behold! The only wild dragon ever caught! Probably a runt, but ah, who can tell?" Waldorf herded Shani back into the shed, and the crowd cheered. "Let's get started!"

Waldorf returned, heaving a table in between Magnus and the crowd. Polite clapping rang throughout the announcements. "Our trainers and their dragons-" He gestured with his staff, nearly knocking Storm in the head, "My lovely niece, Cordelia and her Basic Boulder, Fishlegs!" polite clapping from the crowd ensued, while the girl blushed with her dragon snug against her. "Bartek and his cousin Berta, with their sibling Slithering Raptortongue dragons Ruffnut and Tuffnut!" At those names the twin dragons smashed themselves together, twisting themselves up and bringing their humans closer, making them laugh nervously. "The merchant's daughter, Storm, and her guard dragon, the Deadly Spine Astrid." Storm did her best to smile while Astrid raised her spines in defense, weary of the crowd. "Siegfried, and his Devilish Hogfly, Snotlout!" Both teen and dragon preened before the crowd. "And, lastly, Tuulikki and his Garden Slip dragon, Hiccup." Tuulikki's heart felt as if it was in his throat, his legs threatening to collapse. But he held on for Hiccup, who was eagerly smiling at the crowd, fluttering his overlarge wings for attention.

Magnus roughly pulled a bucket from Waldorf's hands, clanking it down on the table. The applause died down. He drew two slips of paper from it, squinting and mumbling before finally shouting, "First match, Hiccup verses Astrid!"

Tuulikki winced, even as his mouth smiled in acceptance of the match. Okay, so he'd get this over with, and the rest should be a piece of cake! He carried Hiccup to the Arena, where there was a spot left wide open. Storm was put on the opposite side of him, smiling right next to her mother. Astrid was already in the Arena, sniffing at the sides and inspecting the dirt. "Okay, ready?" he whispered to Hiccup. The green dragon cheered, wedging himself out of Tuulikki's arms. Hiccup tossed himself off the stone wall, spreading his wings in a magnificent arc and falling flat on his face.

There was a snicker from the audience, and Magnus clearly shouted, "No reconsid'ren yer bets!"

Oh, yeah, this was gonna be rough. "Hiccup!" The little dragon quickly got up and stared up at Tuulikki, leaning on the stone wall. "Just-do good, Hiccup." He froze when he felt the people's gaze upon him, awkwardly patting his dragon's head.

Hiccup chirred happily, getting back down on his haunches and facing Astrid. "O'kay, fight now!" Mangus gave the signal, and Storm relayed it to Astrid. The spiked dragon reacted quickly, sneering as she crossed the Arena in quick strides. Hiccup hissed in turn, facing down Astrid and whipping his tail around in a show. Storm called out a first attack, "Spine shot!" and her dragon whipped around it's own tail, thin spikes releasing themselves. Hiccup dodged, and the spikes stuck up in the ground on an angle.

He used Astrid's momentary lapse to slam into her. They somersaulted, clinging onto one another, ending up with Astrid on top, baring down on Hiccup. The blue dragon built up a flare from the back of her throat, Storm saw this and quickly called out for her to attack.

Hiccup wriggled free, wrapping his tail around Astrid's leg and pulling her down, making the fireball arc in the air. Her cheek hit the dirt, and the crown of horns scraped against the ground, letting loose a bunch of dust. She hissed and blinked, once, twice before Tuulikki knew that she was blinded. He could use that. "Fire, Hiccup!" Hiccup let loose with a small fireball aimed right at her neck. Astrid growled more out of annoyance than anything, running blindly to the source of the fire. Hiccup yelped loudly, running straight for the spikes Astrid had shot earlier. "And||jump!" Hiccup pushed up as much as he could, flapping his wings deliberately and barely clearing the spines. Astrid was not so lucky. She crashed beak-first into them, cawing in pain. Hiccup turned around, padding his way around to her. The spiked dragon tried to get up, hissing in warning. When it was clear she wasn't getting up soon, Magnus sounded, "And, three, two, one! Astrid is out!"

"Okay girl, you're done!" Storm shouted, getting the attention of her dragon. Astrid relaxed a tad, hissing and muttering in pain. Grey claws tapped on Astrid's nose, then Hiccup relented, taking a wing in his mouth and pulling his fellow dragon upward.

Storm hurried over, getting as close to Astrid as she could and then lifting her up. "Where's the bandages?" she asked before hurrying off, guided by Waldorf to the shed.

Tuulikki offered an arm to Hiccup, letting him climb up and out of the Arena. He quickly studied his dragon for any huge injuries-nothing big, just a few scratches on his legs. "Got some new scars, hey bud?"

"_This is really fun!_" Hiccup burbled, twisting his head to lick at himself. "_Are we doing this tomorrow too?_"

Another hand was shoved in the helmet. "Snotlout and the Twins!" Tuulikki was pushed back in the crowd, away from the Arena. He could barely see, though he could hear. "Ah, no, ye still can't call this unfair! Those two are limp noodles!" Magnus quieted, and Tuulikki could imagine him raising his arms and staff to quell the crowd. "Fight!"

Almost immediately, Siegfried called out, "Fireball!" and a cracking sound fills the air. Through a spot in the crowd, Tuulikki could see the twins diving away from one another-now unseen. Both Snotlout and Siegfried growled, and the thickset dragon jumped into his view. He

was quickly tripped and wound up like a spinning wheel. Siegfried was shouting, "Let! Other left!" before a squeak rang out, apparently Snotlout had got one. There was a swift hitting of claws upon scales-the remaining twin must have been livid, if not jealous of the attention. There was a sudden silence before Magnus called, "He's out!" and the quick calling of the trainers for their dragons. Siegfried moaned, gathering Snotlout in his arms while the cousins high-fived.

So much for getting information.

"Hiccup and Fishlegs!" the ring was swept a little before the two dragons were placed in. Both dragons appeared to be calm, sniffing at each other in greeting. "_Hi friend! Are we fighting?_" Fishlegs asked, looking around at the expectant faces.

"_Yes._" Hiccup patted Fishleg's nose. "_Have to. Don't worry, we'll still be friends after this._"

Fishlegs was unable to understand the last part, because soon after, Cordi yelled, "Fishlegs, _berserk!_" making a hand motion Tuulikki tried hard to forget. The round dragon barreled into Hiccup, making the smaller dragon dig his three feet into the ground. Hiccup beat his wings, breaking up the dirt into dust and forcing Fishlegs to stop and cough. There was a small cloud of dust that Hiccup darted away from-only to smack into the stone wall. Tuulikki winced, his dragon shaking the impact off, patting the wall. Hiccup ran straight into the cloud, a loud hiss telling the onlookers that it was a direct hit. He left full speed out of the dust and bounding off the wall again for another hit. Hiccup repeated this several times before finally tumbling out of the cloud with Fishlegs, who was on his back, beaten. The green dragon looked around at the crowd before presenting his 'catch' to Tuulikki.

"Well." Magnus said, finally acknowledging the win. "Next is a break, so that our Hiccup here can rest before he meets with our final match; him and the twins. And then to the last prize, the wild dragon!"

A cheer rang up from the crowd, just as Hiccup jumped into Tuulikki's arms. "_He was so happy I scratched him!_"

Thank goodness the plan worked. "Yeah, you did good." He had been watching the others fight and play with their dragons for over a month. Of course he'd had some idea of what their weak spots were. "My shirt!" He lifted Hiccup upwards, seeing the dust he had left. "Let's get you washed up." Tuulikki moved to the shed, grabbing a bucket of water that was set aside. Shani was still inside, waiting to be rescued. He remembered his promise; slay Maxima, no matter what. Grabbing Hiccup and wiping him down was easy, and Tuulikki found his eyes on the gathered crowd - engrossed in a surprise 'best loser' final, Storm having lamented not seeing what a well-trained Fishlegs could do.

The people around the Arena all moved in sync, enough to remind him of the forest dragons. They fought as one creature, not like separate ones. If Tuulikki could find out a way to keep them interested, maybe he would get help facing Maxima. If everyone had a rock, or a knife, or did somethingâ€¦it would help him. He couldn't do that, anyway. No one listens to him, unlessâ€¦

"Hiccup!" he jolted the dragon from his resting, "I need you to win. Without question." the creature in his arms nodded. "You need to face your father. I have an plan." Tuulikki looked again, at the scars up and down Hiccup, "I'm sorry. For all of this. For you getting hurt. _That your dad's gonna attack you._" he added last, in hushed Dragonese.

Hiccup shrugged, "_It was bound to happen anyway._"

"What." What kind of life had Hiccup led before they met? To make him even think that? Tuulikki fumbled, "Umâ€¦okay." They'd deal with that laterâ€¦maybe.

A hand popped into his view, startling him. "Gah!"

A quiet, stony voice came from his side. "Oh, hey Tulle. Where's the medical supplies?" Storm was clutching Astrid, the blonde girl rigid, impatient. Her smile was a taut little line. Tuulikki led her inside the shed, where there was a small table and medicines set up. He put Hiccup down, not paying attention to the dragon's path straight to the cage. Shani had settled back down into a ball, and Hiccup didn't have the heart to disturb him. This went unnoticed by the others.

Astrid was reluctantly sat down, Storm hovering over her. Tuulikki took a quick look at her dragon; there were puffy areas where on humans there would be bruising, few cuts, but he could tell the most by the way Astrid was still. "So I'm guessing it was a close match?" Tuulikki said, breaking the silence.

Astrid hissed just as Storm glared.

"Okay then, watch what I'm doing so you can do this yourself." Tuulikki delicately cleaned out Astrid's cuts. "Okay, I'm going to put pressure on any part I think may have been broken, you better tell me if it hurts." He pressed his fingers against cool blue scales, pulling the muscles deliberately and watching for any signs of pain. Tuulikki sighed once he reached the base of her wing, grabbing a little roll of bandages and carefully wrapping it, "It's a sprain. Don't move the wing too much, or else it'll take longer. The bandages are mostly for keeping the muscles in place so that they can heal." He explained, both to Storm and Astrid.

"How long until they can come off?"

"Until tomorrow morning, or at least until the swelling goes down."

"Thanks Tulle!" She gathered Astrid into her arms again, looking nervous, "Umm, how's Hiccup?"

"Hmm?" he looked down, seeing Hiccup curled on top of Shani's cage. "Hey, c'mon, don't do that." Tuulikki grabbed his dragon and put him on the table, checking over his wounds again and grabbing some small bandages. He winced when Hiccup decided that the salve was a waste and decided his own saliva would work much better. "Ugh, someday you're not going to be able to solve all your problems by licking them." Hiccup snorted and lapped at his finger. "Oh, fine."

Unseen by them, Storm smiles.

"Hey!" Siegfried crashed through the door. "C'mon, it's time for the final! We need Hiccup!" He was hurried out the door, pushed again into the mid-afternoon sunlight. "Oh man I can't wait to see you fail!"

"Thanks." Tuulikki said, deadpan. Though he was reassured that his bully hadn't gone completely insane. "_Ready?" he hissed at Hiccup, looking nervously at the cousins and their twin dragons. Hiccup was ready, jumping out of his arms the second he was able to.

Ruffnut and Tuffnut looked raring to go. They were twisting over their owners arms before being lowered into the ring, bashing their heads together before growling good-naturedly.

Berta smirked at Tuulikki, "Are you ready to face the world's most deadliest weapon?" and with that the crowd laughed.

"_It's me!" _Tuffnut crowed.

"_No, it's me!" _Ruffnut pushed at her brother, making them tumble around in the dirt.

Hiccup made an exaggerated yawn, startling some of the crowd before stomping his three feet in impatience. "_How about you prove it?" _The twins stopped their tussling, immediately going at Hiccup.

"Well. It seems I'm not needed." Magnus backed away from the ring.

Hiccup beat his wings and jumped, getting a little air and letting the twins miss and slam their bodies on the wall. He somersaulted, then stretched his neck back and delivered a small burst of fire. That had gotten their attention. Ruff, or maybe Tuff had sprung forward, latching their mouth on Hiccup's remaining leg and starting chewing as if her/his life depended on it. Closer examination told Hiccup that it was Ruffnut he was dealing with, Tuffnut closing in to tackle him.

It was at that point that Hiccup started to worry. "_Oh, who's going to fight my father if both of you are the best fighters?" _he wondered aloud.

Tuffnut skidded, "_What? Everyone knows I'm the better fighter-see?" _and he jumped on Hiccup's back, clawing in between his wings. The other twin hissed, biting down on Hiccup's leg even harder, making the green dragon cry out in pain.

Tuulikki winced, hearing every word. Ruffnut was now snarling in Hiccup's face. He saw the twins positions, if Hiccup could just move a little— "Hiccup! Handstand!" he yelled.

There was a grunt, and Hiccup flapped his wings hard and pushed his back leg harder, turning over and making Tuffnut crash into Ruffnut.

"Ruff!" "Tuff!" "What are you- Get Hiccup!" The cousins shouted, but the two were already tussling and arguing at the top of their

lungs.

"_Get out of my way!" "No, YOU'RE in MY way!" "Ugh I wish I didn't have a stupid brother!" "Me too!"_

Hiccup moved a safe distance away, then shot a fireball at them. The twins, stunned, let Hiccup put his claws to their noses. Most of the crowd had accepted that gesture as an end to the fights, and cheered.

"It's like I don't even run the place anymore." Magnus grumbled. "Game set!" he hooked his staff under Hiccup, lifting him. "The winner is Hiccup!" There was the roar of the crowd as Tuulikki gathered Hiccup up in his arms. The little dragon was preening, drinking in the attention while his human delicately lifted his wings and legs, checking for injuries. "And now for tha big boy! Are you ready for tha wild dragon!" Magnus egged the crowd on, looking at Hiccup, who was also getting more and more excited. "Ohh ho ho, looks like Hiccup's ready!" He signaled Waldorf to bring in the final challenger.

Shani was snarling, hissing, spitting and thrashing at the air, impressing the crowd. The older teen struggled, finally shoving the scarlet dragon into the ring.

"Ready?" Tuulikki asked, tipping Hiccup's head over so he could look into his eyes.

Even with Hiccup's snorted, "_Of course!"_, Tuulikki didn't let go until he had to. Something about that dragon made him want to protect, to hold on until he couldn't. The freckled dragon dived into the ring, hunkering down to eye level with is opponent.

"Go on! He's probably no' waiting fer a signal, go!" the dragon master flicked his hand, leaning back, but neck craning for a view. Indeed, the crowd had followed his example, watching eagerly, but tense.

Tuulikki couldn't blame them. Hiccup and Shani were circling each other, their size difference more obvious than before. Sure, the scarlet dragon was clearly weakened, but so was Hiccup. It would take a miracle, for a runt dragon like his own to face an enraged, larger counterpart without some permanent damage.

Well. Good thing he was here. Tuulikki gulped. Now or never.

The dark teen pulled himself up onto the Arena walls before being pulled back. "No! I'm not letting this-" He wrenched his shirt from the bodiless hands and tumbled, face-first into the ring. There was a dead silence, before several hands reached in to grab him from his certain doom. He sat up, into a squatting position and threw his hands out. "No! You need to see this!" Hiccup growled, offended, but Tuulikki hissed back, warning him to stay on task.

The entire arena was still, even Shani had quieted. Tuulikki held his face level with Hiccup, seeing those forest green eyes, taking them in for strength. He turned to the wild dragon, seeing the same eyes. "There is more than one way to defeat an enemy." Tuulikki crept closer to Shani, humming under his breath. The scarlet dragon flared its wings threateningly, pacing a nervous circle in the dust. "_Calm,

Shani." _the teen rasped, reaching out a hand. There was a breathless moment, and Tuulikki felt scales pressed into his palm. "You can't respond to fear with hatred-they sense it, can't you? The only way to conquer your fear is to face it, dragons included."

Then he turned his back to the dragon, ignoring the gasps from the crowd. Shani climbed upward, his body covering almost the entirety of Tuulikki's, head resting on his right shoulder. The teenager staggered, leaving the silent arena. He called to Hiccup, who scaled his left arm. The people backed away, still awed. Not a word was said as the teen staggered away, focused on one thing: getting home.

The afternoon sun was at his back. Shani's wings were relaxed, splayed out to the sides of his arms. Twin breaths could be heard in his ears. If he tilted his head, his shadow looked like a dragon. Maybe he could've been, in another lifetime.

Tondra practically burst out of the doorway to greet him, cake in her hands. There must have been a look in his eyes, a wild, hurt look, because for a moment Tuulikki was afraid his mother couldn't recognize him. Then she said, "Well. It's about time you got home. Let's set up a blanket for your friends, eh?"

He couldn't help but smile.

Shani and Hiccup were seen to first; only when their bellies were full, legs bandaged and themselves lying on comfortable blankets, could Tuulikki be pressed on what had happened. He ended up telling his mother all of it-how he found Hiccup in the woods up until the present, the two eating cake together past the sunset.

When his story was finished, Tondra smiled and said, "The first story you told me was better-a real underdog one. This one sounds very unfair to the other trainers."

He snorted despite himself, "Mo-aahhh-mmmâ€|."

She only kissed his forehead, making the teen groan louder, "Off to bed with you. Victor or not, I'm expecting you to do your chores tomorrow."

Shani was left in the back of the house, far away from the doors and noise. Hiccup took his customary pillow, and fell into sleep just as his friend did.

Dawn was barely touching the sky when Tuulikki was forced awake.

* * *

><p>Notes: The breed names for the dragons were mixed up versions of names taken from the HTTYD books. I used the wiki.

And, honestly, if the twins got their heads together, they're a force to be reckoned with. I mean, they made Snotlout believe that he was dying, tamed other dragons (with some support from the others on Scauldy, I admit), mapped out the Whispering Death's tunnels and may have even invented ice cream! Seriously.

And it's not really night in the last sentence, sorry about

that.

Oh, and I saw HTTYD2 it's super amazing. I have the soundtrack, it's delicious and perfect and I write to it all the time, but mostly sob at 'For the Dancing and Dreaming'.

****Ill****

****Up Next:****The Legend of Haakon, a.k.a the recap chapter narrated by Hiccup.

20. The Legend of Haakon

****Summary: ****At the start of every legend, there is a meeting. In an isolated village, a boy discovers an injured dragon, taking them closer to their shared destiny as friends and brothers. Though, it may not be the way you remember. Human!Toothless and Dragon!Hiccup AU.

FLASHBACK CHAPTER! This is a first-person narrative told by Hiccup to Tuulikki when they were traveling back from Kuniklo. Reread up to chapter 14 for the full effect. This is his story. Most of the stuff he shouldn't know at the time was told to him later by his tribe and the White Death.

If I have failed in it not being too Hiccup-y, please remember these reasons:

He's using a limited vocabulary for Tuulikki's sake. (Not that he's listening, anyway.) And he's repeating what the other dragons have said to him, and they're not exactly good conversationalists.

****Trigger Warning****: Cannibalism and infanticide, though it's glossed over as much as possible.

* * *

><p>The Legend of Haakon

I need to tell you a story, Toothless. Let me on your shoulders so you can hear me. I have come a long way, and I think it's time for the truth. Seeing Alvin reminded me of my past, of what I must do to help my tribe.

But first, I need to tell you a story. One from before I was born.

Once upon a time, there was a great hunter in our tribe. Her scales were bone-white, her teeth the same. She was bright and quick and smart, the fastest in the forest. She would often challenge the other dragons to feats of strength or skill. When she'd win, she'd laugh and laugh until the sun set.

Eventually, she grew larger, eating more and more of her catch, deciding that the others 'weren't worthy of her prizes'. She became faster, stronger, deadlier than before. Even after seeing her competitors defeated faces, she'd laugh and would eat them whole. She tried forcing the other dragons to feed her, but they refused and

hid.

So she thought and thought, coming up with a terrible plan.

Once every few years, the dragons would lay their eggs in a large cavern. The eggs would hatch together, and the young would play with each other. Once they grew their colors, the tribe would let them into the forest. The young would be taught how to hunt, how to talk, how to be dragons. The cavern was the only truly safe place any dragon knows of.

With the help of another dragon, she snuck in, laughing to herself. "Maybe I'll scare the little ones into feeding me." she said. The tribe had left the children food, and even the other dragon had left her food, but after a few days, she had eaten it all.

She saw her body shrink, and desperate to reign over the hatchlings, said, "At least one wouldn't hurtâ€¦" Then she snapped up an egg. Wicked as she was, the dragon liked the taste and soon had gathered all the eggs she could find at the back of the cave.

Days passed, and she had eaten them all in a fit of boredom. Snapping her jaws on the last, she murmured, "Ah well, at least I'm full." She tried moving, but found her body had grown into the cavern, trapping herself. The dragon screeched, thrashing against the stone walls and stretching out her claws for something to hold onto. In doing so, she found the last egg. The dragon carefully tried moving it toward herself, only using her claw tips. It fell on the ground, shattering. She roared in anger.

The baby dragon roared back, answering her. It had no knowledge of it's clan mates, of the warmth and security of it's might-have-been family. It only had the cold claws on it's back and a shrieking voice of fury, straining to eat him.

The tribe had noticed the screaming. Soon, they had discovered them, a giant dragon and a tiny one, engaged in a yelling contest. "Hah!" she cried, "If you starve me, I shall be free and eat every one of you for tricking me in here! So now you must feed me."

That was eight years ago.

The she-dragon is still in the cavern, fed by the forest tribe. The traitor dragon that snuck her in was banished. The little dragon still lives.

And that little dragonâ€¦was me. My name is Haakon of the Byot'ler. For as long as I can remember, I have been alone. My family was eaten before they were hatched, and I have suffered the consequences. A dragon is not their own until they gain color. All dragons grow their color in the cave, taking what was their 'favorite' and matching it to their scales. I did not, not until I had left.

It was my first memory, after the cold and the loudness of the cavern, I ran. After the darkness, it was too bright. I ran, blinded, as fast as I could. My eyes opened, and all I could see was the green, green leaves and moss, the bright grey pebbles in the river. I matched it, disappearing into the forest forever. That was my second-favorite memory.

My favorite memory, Toothless, was of humans, though I've never met them. Let me explain. There is a part of the forest where humans pass through. I learned from them, hearing their songs and following the caravans. A herd of Stringy-legs, you say _goats_, had passed by. A young woman was leading them, dark hands holding a staff in the air in joy. Behind her was a man in a cart with a dark child on his lap, so big he made the child seem even smaller. They were all singing in tune, making the forest light up with a sort of magic that comes with togetherness.

It was from them, and from following others like them, I learned humanspeak.

When I told the elders, they gasped. They tell the young ones -well, only me- about the Toothfuls. They're like humans, a lot like humans and you can't tell one from the other until you're up close. They have spare teeth hidden by their paws and can remove them without hurting themselves. They hunt around the forest, huge and lurking.

When I got older, I realized it was nonsense-mostly. I didn't have a problem, Toothfuls need to eat, except they were so bad at hiding themselves. If it wasn't for the traps none of us would've survived.

Yes, I said none of us. I took from the traps, when I realized I could. No one else knew. It was a game, a fun little game to steal from the Toothfuls to give to my tribe.

It wasn't so much fun when I was caught.

I will not tell you it in full; I don't want to scare you.

I know now that I was arrogant, I didn't see how it worked until before jumping in. if I had a friend, I could've been helped. I had the bait, but I wasn't quick enough. My leg -the one I don't have now-, was crushed. I cried and struggled, but there was no one. Somewhere along the line I lost myself-when a dragon is in so much pain they lose their thoughts, their self, their soul-to survive.

When I came to, my leg was gone, and I was free. In pain, but free. The world was bright, too bright and I hobbled around, fighting with myself. Should I go to the cavern and deal with the shame? Or should I take my chances with the Toothfuls? I was too weak, I couldn't decide. All I could do was rest against a tree, and suddenly-

It was a Toothful, young, waving it's paw-tooth in around in a show of power. It's hide was dark and loose, with few spare teeth. The Toothful's eyes were unnatural green, burning like fire. My mind grew blank, I had to move, I had to run. And it did something I thought wasn't possible. The Toothful laughed.

I didn't understand. Everything I knew-it was wrong? Was this Toothful a human, or this human also a Toothful? I need to get away.

I took one step, and another, and my world darkened. I didn't understand until later that it was you. You swallowed me in your warm skin and carried me.

I awoke to a skin-tongue scraping at my wound. I remember thinkingâ€|_'this Toothful doesn't have a tooth. So, what is it?' _It's eyes were still unnaturally green, but now they were open, curious. My not-leg itched, so I turned and licked at it, soothing it. The Toothful gaped, then wrapped the wound in a skin. _'It's so much unlike other Toothfuls. I need another name.' _I thought, pulling my head away from the curious eyes. A Toothful with no teeth? One that hunts alone? That doesn't kill, but heal? What would I call it?

I thought and thought until night fell. The air was cold, and I fidgeted, usually burrowing into the ground at this time. A new skin, thick and warm, covered me. I knew his name.

Tooth-less.

After that, it was just a matter of getting better. You fed me, and I tried greeting you. You were so skittish. You would only touch me if I needed help, back then. Not like now. You propped me up on my three legs and let me wander around your cave. Humans are strange creatures-they help without asking, but once you tell them, they're shocked. As if the thought never occurred.

You finally let me greet you, and we continued walking together. You would chatter on and on, not expecting a reply, and I would listen and wait. I know you must think I was bored, butâ€|those were the days that I loved.

Even when you screwed up Dragonspeak, I was alright, because I knew you were my friend. My first friend. It was funny, you didn't seem to think that we were family, but you acted as if we were. Another human mystery.

I know you are a good Toothless, you wouldn't let me go until you thought I was ready. I left you so I could return. I went to see my father, Shani the Vast. He will always be bigger than me, -that's what Vast, means, _big_, - but I know that's what all fathers are like. Shani was mad about my leg, but I explained, about the skin-tongue, about the healing, about the Dragonspeak.

He listened, and told me that I had changed. Changed, but not for better or worse. He said that depending on you, Toothless, was good, that I had a cavemate, a brother, just not a typical one. But it was also bad, because I could depend on you too much. I could become lazy and fat off of the food you give me. But mostly, he said that no dragon could survive alone, especially without a leg. To which I promptly responded, 'well, let me prove it' and sauntered off for dinner.

I was hunted down by the traitor dragon no less than ten minutes later. Though, you gave him a different name, Alvin. You have to tell me what it means in humanspeak, ok? I normally wouldn't be afraid of Alvin, but he had a very Toothful beside him. The first thing I thought of, was you. You could probably convince this very Toothful to not hunt me and everything would be fine. But you weren't there. Was this what my father was talking about? I had no time to think.

So, I ran. I made sure to try and lose them through the muddy

riverbanks, but Alvin wouldn't stay away.

You found me, and you stopped Alvin. I knew that you would, but he was hurting you. I understood what my father had said - I could not keep you without cost. If I had you as a friend, I must defend you as well. So I charged, biting under Alvin's eyes.

You took a hit again anyway.

The Very Toothful stopped Alvin, and you talked, and we left. That's when I decided. I needed to become stronger, like you.

And it wasn't like I was stuck in your cave forever. I took your festerers and fed them to my tribe. My father was terribly mad that Alvin was still alive. But I asked him to hold on, to wait. He could help us face Maxima, I pleaded. I had a hope. A blind hope that you may gather enough humans to help slay Maxima. I'm sorry for tricking you. I'm sorry for leading you into this. But we are dying. The dragons of the forest cannot go on much longer-we're stuck feeding a beast instead of ourselves.

I talked to my father again, and he agreed to show you Maxima. I need to leave again, I need to tell him where Alvin has been all of this time.

I only hope we are ready for what comes next.

* * *

><p>Notes: Baby Hiccup's yelling is based on a baby kittens-they're young and ready to start some serious fights.

Don't worry, Hiccup, even I don't know how Tuulikki's trap works.

Alvin is German for Noble friend. A direct miss on the noble business, but as a friend, dragon!Alvin won't stand for disrespect at least.

â€|And I hope you liked this chapter!

I11

End
file.